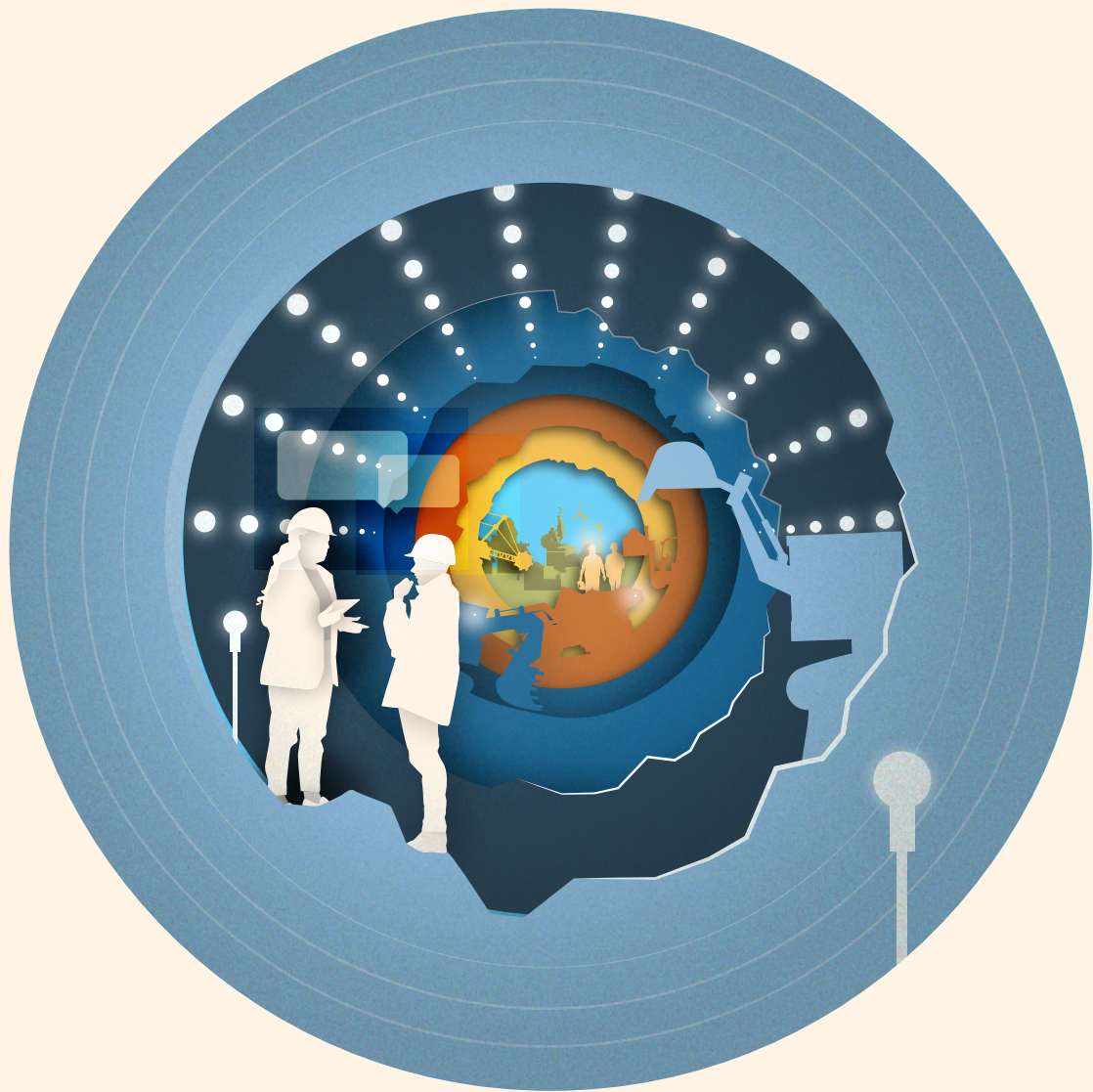




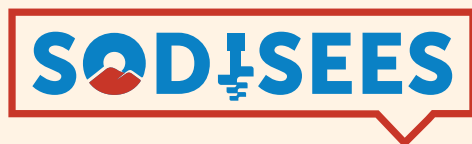
STRENGTHEN SOCIAL DIALOGUE TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN THE EUROPEAN EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES



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**STRENGTHEN SOCIAL
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IN THE EUROPEAN
EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES**

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2023, the social partners Euromines and IndustriAll Europe started a project under the European Sectoral Social Dialogue process to foster social dialogue with the aim of improving sustainable practices in European extractives industries. This is because sustainability is a key challenge for this industry and its workers, as this report will demonstrate. The social partner representatives of the extractive industries expect this project to pursue at least four objectives:

-  Give an overview of the economic and social situation of the sector and the challenges ahead in terms of economic as well as social sustainability.
-  Build a social partners' common assessment of the challenges ahead and the role of social dialogue in addressing it.
-  Identify the good practices of social dialogue and industrial relations to implement sustainable solutions for the sector.
-  Provide tools for effective social dialogue in implementing sustainable solutions in the sector.

To do so, Syndex together with the social partners, IndustriAll Europe and Euromines, have developed a technical and methodological approach that relies on a multi-dimensional perspective:

-  A comprehensive programme of desk research and a literature review to gather the knowledge and quantitative data needed to draw an overall picture of the issues at stake in the project, especially: the socio-economic situation of the sector and the current and future trends of the extractive industries in Europe with regard to sustainability, identify sustainable practices and technologies and provide an overview of social dialogue and industrial relations in the sector. Desk research is a necessary first step and will be continued during the project, as required.
-  Evidence gathered by desk research was complemented by qualitative data, gathered via two main methods: selected interviews and information gathered during workshops and conferences. Three workshops were held in Sevilla, Stockholm and Katowice. Selected interviews were conducted throughout the duration of the project.
-  Syndex, in collaboration with the social partners, designed a survey that it sent to members of both organisations involved in the project. The results of this survey helped to provide more qualitative and quantitative data, identifying relevant cases and supplying materials for the workshops. These results are presented in this report.

This report outlines the current context and the sustainability challenges faced by the extractive sector. It explores six key social issues -attractiveness, inclusion, innovation, training and skills, green transition, and social dialogue- illustrated through examples of good practices.

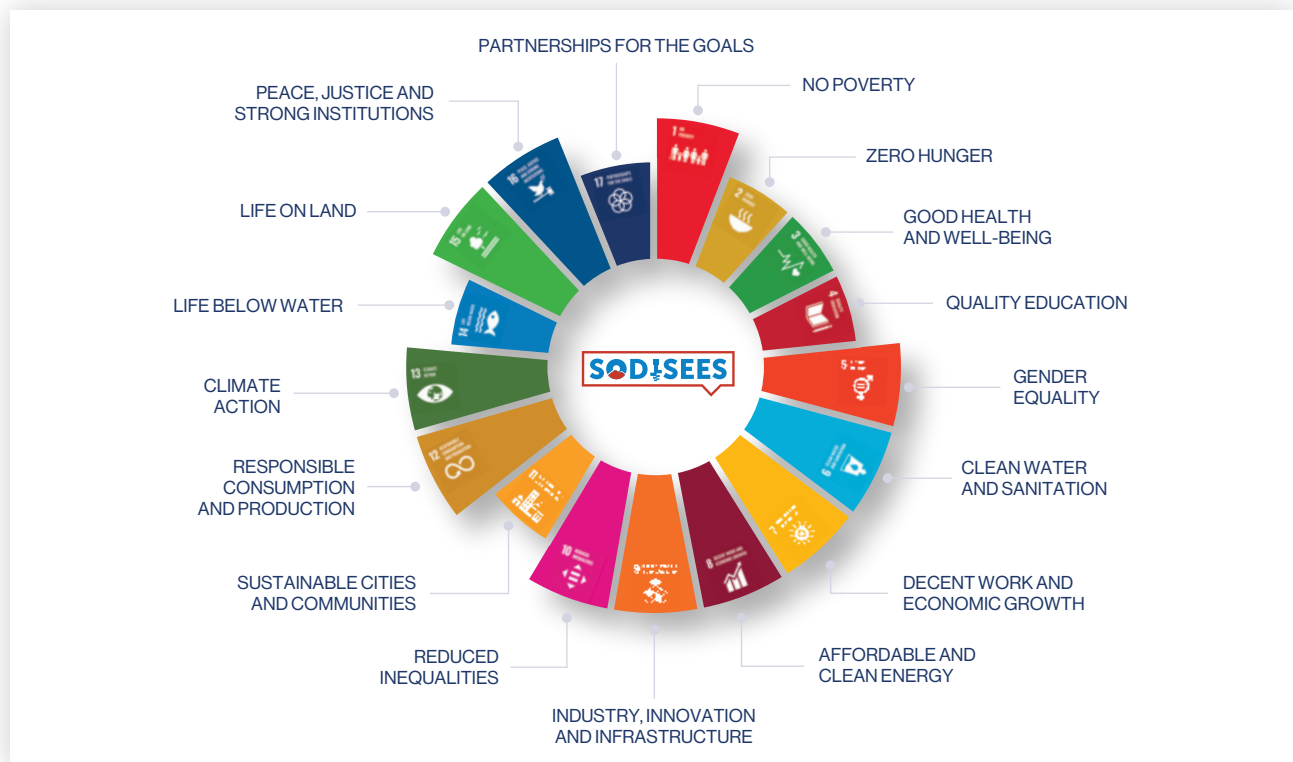
CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE EXTRACTIVES INDUSTRIES: A SECTOR AT THE CROSSROAD

The UN¹ states that

“The extraction of minerals from the earth presents opportunities, challenges, and risks to sustainable development. Minerals are essential for human wellbeing and are fundamental for practically all sectors of the economy. However, mining also presents critical challenges and risks for sustainability. [...] Environmental and social problems and risks posed by mining are increasingly generating conflicts between mining companies and local communities.

[...] Mining activities can also contribute to sustainable development, particularly to its economic dimension. It can bring fiscal revenues to a country, drive economic growth, create jobs and contribute to building infrastructure. Thus, mining has both positive and negative implications for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particularly strong impacts on 11 of the 17 the SDGs”



¹ Managing mining for sustainable development. A sourcebook” UNDP, April 2018.

While certain minerals are essential to the transition toward the green economy², an increasing awareness of environmental impacts and collective calls for better sustainability are leading to a time of transformation in the mining industry, where companies are operating the shift towards greener operations. Indeed, and due to the impact that mining activities can have on the natural environment, mining companies are consistently considering how they can improve their environmental performances.

Moreover, and together with the environmental issues as stated by the IEA

“If poorly managed, mineral development can lead to a myriad of negative consequences, including social impacts stemming from corruption and misuse of government resources, fatalities and injuries to workers and members of the public, human rights abuses including child labour and unequal impacts on women and girls.”

Companies therefore have an incentive to address both environmental and social harms to reduce risk and maintain a social license to operate as the “social contract” of mining operators is being redefined. Today we observe that:

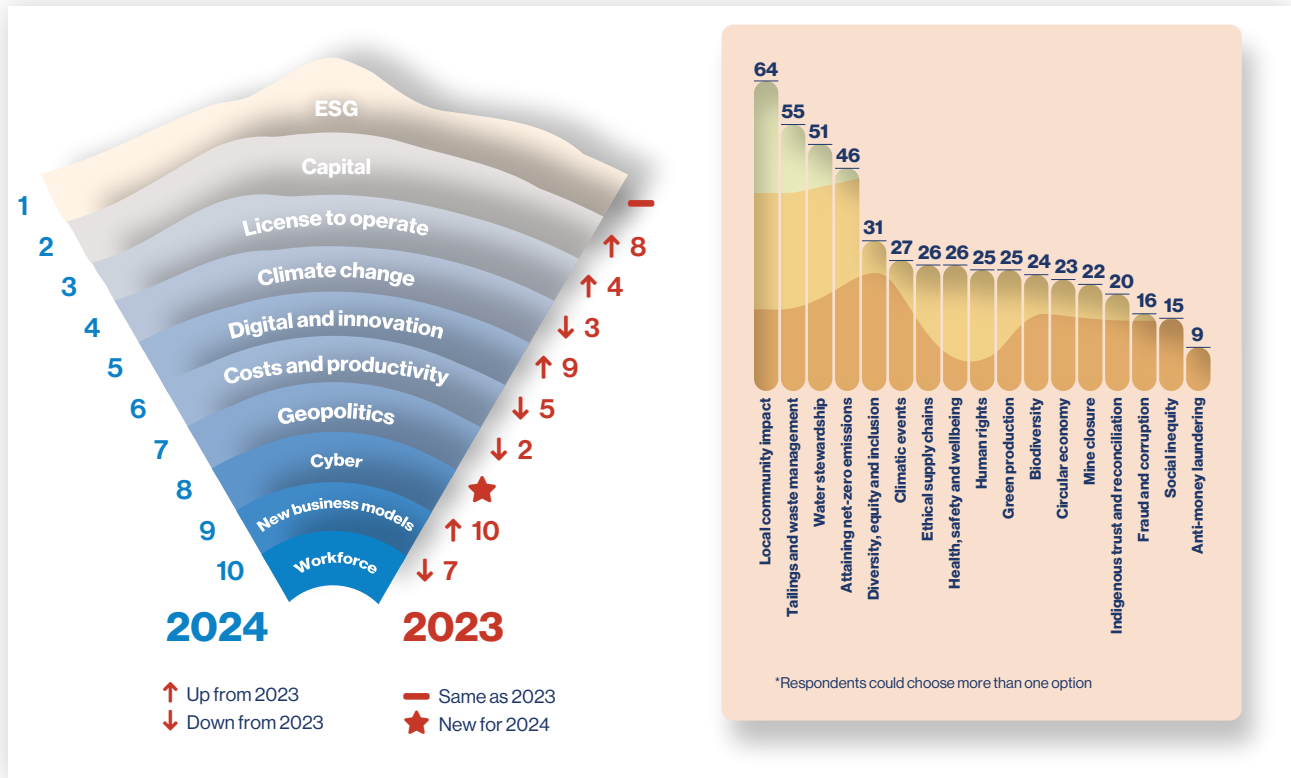
- There are increasingly high expectations with regard to the consideration and mitigation of human rights risks.
- Community involvement and impact are increasingly central to investors’ concerns worldwide.
- There is increasing mobilisation by civil society and activist groups.
- Government expectations are also evolving, moving away from raw resource nationalism focused on extracting payments, towards more complex forms of benefit sharing and local value addition.

We are thus seeing a shift from a “Do no harm” approach (e.g. mitigating environmental and social impacts) to an active pursuit of positive social impacts that explains why stakeholders are increasingly careful about ESG issues. This shift is confirmed by several studies³ pointing that the correct implementation of an ESG approach is today the greatest risk for mining companies as the failure to respond to these social demands could not only undermine reputation but also lead to difficulties in raising capital or even to legal liability. However, the ESG approach is also a great opportunity to differentiate and make improvements that will create long-term value for all stakeholders.

² “The growth of minerals supply not only plays a vital role in enabling clean energy transitions but also holds great promise to lift some of the world’s poorest people out of poverty.” Source: The Role of Critical World Energy Outlook Special Report Minerals in Clean Energy Transitions” IEA, March 2022.

³ “Top 10 business risks and opportunities for mining and metals in 2024”. EY.

A strong ESG commitment thus becomes essential to obtain operating permits and can also become a competitive advantage.



Against this situation a wide range of sustainability challenges for mining operations can be identified today:

- Reduction of the mining sector's carbon footprint** as it encompasses a large variety of activities, from extraction to transportation and processing, which generate direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions.
- Water conservation** as water is used extensively for mineral processing, dust suppression, and in extraction processes. Therefore, sustainable water practices are not only vital for preserving local ecosystems but are also necessary for the industry's long-term viability.
- Site rehabilitation** is a critical aspect of responsible mining, ensuring that ecosystems disturbed during mining activities are restored. This involves addressing soil erosion, replanting native vegetation, and reclaiming disturbed lands. Mining's impact on the environment extends beyond extraction, making effective site rehabilitation a key sustainability challenge.
- Effective community engagement** is crucial for mining companies aiming to properly balance the economic benefits of operation while minimising negative impacts on local communities. The social license to operate depends on fostering positive relationships, addressing concerns, actively involving local communities in decision-making processes and establishing trust by means of transparent communication and cooperation with local stakeholders.

- **Biodiversity preservation** as mining activities often intersects with diverse ecosystems, raising concerns about their impact on biodiversity. So, it is important for companies to assess these impacts and explore measures that allow mining to coexist harmoniously with natural habitats.
- The **mining supply chain** (extraction, processing, transportation, and delivery) plays a pivotal role in determining the industry's overall environmental impact. The numerous stages involved have various environmental impacts, so there is a need to address sustainability concerns across the supply chain to minimise adverse effects on ecosystems and communities.

Given these challenges, the journey towards sustainability looks complex, but nevertheless necessary for the mining industry to ensure its relevance and resilience in the face of an evolving global society and to guarantee the social acceptance of its activities.

Social acceptability is the ability of a mining operation to gain and maintain informal acceptance of its activities by local communities and society as a whole. As a result, all mining players are reviewing their operational and CSR strategies to:

- Focus on sustainability and ESG performances
- Support the development of a more diversified range of minerals, with a specific focus on metals and minerals relevant to the green and digital transition
- Further promote the decarbonisation and digitalisation of the sector, by promoting cleaner energy sources and greater innovation
- Create more resilient supply chains and improve resource efficiency
- Develop skills to ensure a diverse and skilled workforce.

The issue of sustainability is especially important in Europe as Raw Materials (RM) are indispensable for the EU economy and a wide set of necessary technologies for strategic sectors such as renewable energy, digital, aerospace and defence. The Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) highlights the issue of sustainability⁴ and therefore compels companies to strengthen their policies on this matter.

The European stakeholders covered by the scope of this project highlight the importance of increasing the sustainability of the European extractive industries when identifying their

⁴ Whereas 17, Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) N° 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020: "In order to ensure the sustainability of increased critical raw material production, new critical raw materials projects should be planned and implemented sustainably covering all aspects of sustainability highlighted in the Commission's publication of 11 September 2021, entitled 'EU principles for sustainable raw materials', including ensuring environmental protection, the prevention and minimisation of socially adverse impacts through the use of socially sustainable practices, including respect for human rights such as the rights of women, and transparent business practices. Projects should also ensure engagement in good faith as well as comprehensive and equitable consultations of relevant stakeholders such as local communities and indigenous peoples. Special attention should be paid to the respect for human rights where a project involves potential resettlement. To provide project promoters with a clear and efficient way of complying with this criterion, compliance with relevant Union or national law, international standards, guidelines and principles, as relevant, or participation in a certification scheme recognised under this Regulation should be considered to be sufficient."

main challenges⁵:

*“Putting in place conditions to ensure sustainable, efficient and socially just mining”,
“Improve the social image of these industries and improve working conditions, taking into account the various exposures affecting workers and the social environment”,
“Raising the company’s own awareness to demonstrate to mining regions that it is a company that cares about the health of its workers and the environment”,
“Increasing the social responsibility of industry in order to guarantee European sovereignty and prevent relocation”,
“Offer sustainable development and be respectful of the environment while being a profitable business”*

Nevertheless, and at the European level, the issue of sustainability must be addressed alongside other concerns deemed highly relevant by the social partners, namely the “Need to ensure a just transition for the workers of the extractive industries.”⁶

CHALLENGES TO BE ADRESSED BY THE SECTOR REGARDING SUSTAINABILITY

From a social perspective, extractive industries face many challenges:

- The need to improve working conditions and social protection as major ways to enhance the sector’s attractiveness.
- The need to diversify the workforce in terms of age, gender and skill sets.
- The need to foster digital and green skills.
- The need to transition from “traditional skills” to new competencies to face the challenges related to coal mine closures and increasing automation.

At the same time, the sector is facing new demands driven by the twin transition and evolving social and societal principles that had previously guided the sector. As a result, the sector must undertake a transition that will:

- Guarantee the long-term viability of business operations.
- Respond to the challenges posed by Europe’s twin transition⁷.
- Support the implementation of the green transition while guaranteeing a just transition⁸.
- Guarantee the sustainability of jobs and working conditions.

⁵ Answers given to the questionnaire sent to IndustriAll and Euromines members.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ The twin transition refers to the combination of the green transition and the digital transition. While the digital transition harnesses technologies for sustainability, efficiency and empowerment, the green transition focuses on combating climate change and environmental degradation. The interaction between these two transitions is crucial to co-evolve and create synergies that achieve the goals of a sustainable society and a resilient and competitive economy.

⁸ Just transition as defined at international level, i.e. a transition that “guarantees the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their trade unions, employers and governments, and on consultation with communities and civil society”.

1. ENHANCING SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Social dialogue can take different forms depending on the actors involved in the process and the level at which it takes place. Thus, and from the perspective of stakeholders involved, social dialogue can be either tripartite or bipartite:

- **Tripartite** whenever it involves public authorities.
- **Bipartite** when it only involves social partners. Bipartite dialogue can take place at different levels:
 - ➔ At the European level mainly within sectoral social dialogue committees, such as the one for the extractive industries.
 - ➔ At the national level.
 - ➔ At the cross-industry level.
 - ➔ At the company level.

However, it must be noted that informal social dialogue (i.e., dialogue that does not result in a formal collective agreement and arising outside legally established processes and bodies) also plays a significant role. Informal social dialogue fosters the search for solutions in response to specific events, allows for consultation among the parties, on-the-ground negotiation collective action. In short, social dialogue and its participants may choose to prioritise substance over form. This dimension is illustrated through several examples.

In a similar vein, it is worth highlighting company-led initiatives developed in collaboration with workers and their representatives to improve working conditions, even when these initiatives are not specifically framed within formal social dialogue processes. For instance, since 2023, Euromines has organised the Euromines Safety Awards⁹ to recognise the fundamental role of health and safety in the European mining industry.

With respect to “*formal*” social dialogue in the extractives’ industries’ sector and, according to the results¹⁰ of the survey conducted as part of this project, social dialogue takes place at all levels, with social dialogue bodies present at each level of representation.

Regardless of the form it takes, social dialogue is a key component in ensuring a just transition:

- European social dialogue could play a key role in identifying the appropriate level of analysis needed to address the many challenges facing the sector, while also fostering greater involvement of stakeholders.

⁹ In 2023 three companies received awards for their involvement in occupational Health and Safety: **Boliden** for its “Improved Organisational and Social Work Environment” project aimed at improving H&S in the psychosocial work environment through various tools and ways of working such as daily pulse meetings and monthly discussions, creating a dedicated team to promote proactive activities related to these issues. **Eldorado Gold Corporation** for its “Employee Engagement” project designed to encourage supervisors to interact with blue-collar employees on safety, using various opportunities to improve safety culture and communication between white-collar and blue-collar employees. **LKAB** for its “Safe Conveyor Belts from port-to-port” project aimed to identify risks and standardize safety solutions for conveyors, which resulted in the training of over 1,200 persons, the identification of 6,000 risks, and the fixing of most of them.

¹⁰ See the annex for the data.

- Social dialogue could contribute to ensuring Europe's energy sovereignty, while putting forward principles of social and environmental sustainability.
- Social dialogue is the guarantor of a just transition as defined at international level, i.e. a transition that *“guarantees the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their trade unions, employers and governments, and on consultation with communities and civil society”*.

Within the scope of the current project, the results of the questionnaire sent to the social partners highlight mixed feelings regarding the quality of social dialogue (see graph below).



Moreover, the workshops organised during this project highlighted the difficulties existing in some countries to implement a real social dialogue as well as the importance of a stable regulatory framework and of a political willingness to voice the social partners.

Irrespective of these difficulties, all the respondents agree on a major conclusion: social dialogue is a major contributor to meet the challenges of the extractive industries. Indeed, according to the respondents, social dialogue can contribute to:

- Improve the promotion of education and mobility.
- Set up mechanisms to increase competitiveness.
- Set up mechanisms to ensure a socially acceptable transition away from coal.
- Ensure a smooth transition between professions
- Accompany change-guaranteeing the ethical nature of political and industrial decisions, ensuring that everyone's rights are respected, and denouncing abuses if need be.

- Train, retrain, implement vocational training and manage the green transition, thus ensuring a just transition.
- Help setting realistic targets to keep pace with energy and social changes.

As stated by the ILO¹¹ some prerequisites must be in place for ensuring full ownership of social dialogue processes by all parties concerned and for their sustainability over time, notably:

- Respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, particularly freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, in line with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). These are recognized both as fundamental rights and enabling conditions for the realization of the Decent Work Agenda and social justice.
- A supportive state and an enabling legal and regulatory framework, including on dispute prevention and resolution. This entails allocation by the state of sufficient resources to enhance the capacity of social partners and labour administration systems. It also requires the integration of social dialogue across all policy areas, with the state acting as both a convenor of tripartite social dialogue and as an employer in the public sector.
- Fostering representative participation to ensure that all the stakeholders address the needs and aspirations of different categories of workers and employers across all segments of labour markets, the economy and society.
- An institutional commitment to pluralism.
- An institutional commitment to pluralism.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Strong and independent workers' and employers' organisations, with the technical capacity and access to relevant information to enable them to participate in social dialogue.

A clear political will to engage in social dialogue on the part of all parties.

Respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining (as cited in ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98).

Appropriate institutional support

Mutual recognition between each representative of the social partners.

This broad and multilevel understanding of social dialogue—as a key enabler of just transitions, requiring institutional support, political will, and mutual recognition—leads naturally to further reflection on how these principles translate into practice. A recent study in France by the Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales (IGAS)¹² looks at comparisons

¹¹ Social Dialogue Report 2024. Peak-level social dialogue for economic development and social progress. ILO, 2024

¹² <https://igas.gouv.fr/pratiques-manageriales-dans-les-entreprises-et-politiques-sociales-en-france-les-enseignements-dune-comparaison-internationale-allemagne-irlande-italie-suede-et-de-la-recherche-0>

between different management models in Europe. Through an analysis of management practices in several European countries, the study shows that social dialogue and its players are the vector for disseminating good practices, but that ultimately there are good and bad examples within each ideotype: the study shows that models depend on the history of each country and the structuring of employee-employer-state relations.

Ultimately “substance over form”: it is above all the willingness of the players to really organize and make a success of a dialogue in substance (taking into account recommendations and alternatives in a pre-defined process) that makes the difference.

1.1. BEST PRACTICES ARISING FROM SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

SETTING UP TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE BODIES

The forms of social dialogue, both formally and substantively (the law, its spirit and its practical practices) are the result of the social history of each region and country. Before the creation of Europe and more generally before globalisation consecrated the importance of the transnational dimension in social dialogue, it was the national level that mainly determined the organisation and purpose of social dialogue.

Today, the growing internationalisation of the economy makes it necessary to develop instruments of social dialogue that go beyond the local/national level. Extractive activities are highly internationalized industries and at the heart of the global value chain and therefore they constitute a good example of this need of developing new forms of social dialogue.

This new need can be addressed in several ways:

- At company level and in Europe, European Works Councils (EWC) are the spearhead of transnational social dialogue, and the revision of the relevant directive¹³ is to be welcomed and, sometimes, European extractive companies have chosen to extend the European social dialogue bodies to their global locations: Eramet being a good example of that.
- At European sectoral level via European sectoral social dialogue. Sectoral social dialogue was formalised in 1998 with the aim of consulting partners on developments at EU level with implications for the workforce and to develop and promote dialogue between social partners at EU sectoral level. The Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Extractive Industries is one of the 44 existing committees.

¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/HIS/?uri=COM%3A2024%3A14%3AFIN>

ERAMET GLOBAL FORUM: TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Location: **France / Global**
Stakeholders: **Employers**
and **unions**



The Eramet Global Forum extends the concept of **European Works Councils (EWC)** to a global scale, responding to the growing internationalisation of the economy and the need for social dialogue beyond national borders.

Eramet

the first mining group globally to set up a transnational social dialogue body (2023)

Employee representatives from **France (including New Caledonia), Gabon, Norway, Senegal, and Argentina**

ERAMET: FROM EWC TO A WORLDWIDE GLOBAL FORUM

In July 2023, the French mining group Eramet became the first mining group in the world to set up a transnational social dialogue body: the Eramet Global Forum.

The Eramet Global Forum brings together employee representatives from the Group's main operating countries: France, including New Caledonia, Gabon, Norway, Senegal and Argentina.

The aim of this body is to deal exclusively with transnational issues to:

-  *"Develop and maintain open social dialogue that respects local cultures. Representatives will discuss Eramet's strategy, CSR commitments and development projects with each other and Group management. The body will enable employee representatives to express their views on key issues for Eramet's future".*
-  *"Negotiate agreements that will apply to all employees on subjects such as social protection, quality of life at work, parenthood and diversity and inclusion".*

EUROPEAN SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

Location: **EU**

Stakeholders: **Workers' representatives (industriAll Europe) and various employers' associations (Euromines, Euracoal, IMA-Europe, Aggregates Europe – UEPG, APEP)**

Formalised in 1998 - One of 44 existing committees at the European sectoral level.



Through consensus, **24 joint opinions were delivered to the European Commission**, uniting workers and employers on climate, training, health, and Just Transition

Sectoral Social Dialogue driving progress in Europe through a unique EU platform where trade unions and employers join forces to:

- Strengthen health & safety at work
- Bridge skills gaps for the green & digital transitions
- Track and influence major EU strategies linked to the Green Deal and future of raw materials industries

EUROPEAN SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE (ESSDC) FOR THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

The committee has the following focus areas:

- Restructuring the different subsectors and retraining the workforce.
- Sharing useful practices and implementing training programmes on health and safety and risk prevention (such as the assessment and prevention of risks with a specific focus on the impact of chemical agents, asbestos and psychosocial risks).
- Providing planning training, education and lifelong learning, and addressing skills challenges related to the twin transition.
- Monitoring the implementation of the energy union strategy, the Carbon Capture and Storage Directive, the Raw Materials Initiative, the European Innovation Partnership and the Circular Economy Package.
- Implementing social dialogue in new Member States.
- Fostering the societal acceptance of mines and quarries, including through responsible mining.
- Monitoring the follow-up and the specific implementing acts of the European Green Deal (Fit for 55, Green Deal Industrial Plan, Net-Zero Industry Act, Emissions Trading System).

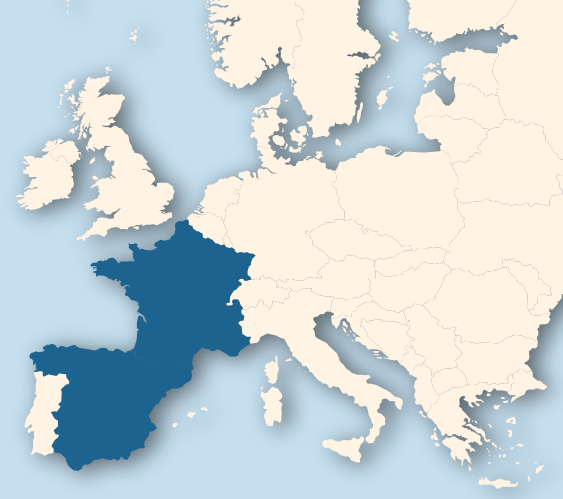
Since the establishment of the ESSDC, 24 joint opinions have been agreed upon and mostly addressed to the European Commission. Some of the common themes are climate change, training and health with a strong focus on just transition concerns.

SOCIAL PARTNERS AS STAKEHOLDERS

Governance encompasses all the institutions, bodies, rules and procedures that enable effective and efficient decision-making in complex structures where the coordination of numerous instruments, levels and actors is essential. In this sense, governance is inseparable from the democratic principle, because it implies the recognition and incorporation of these complex, multipolar and coordinated conditions into political systems based on the recognition and guarantee of the ideological pluralism of society and the conflicts of interest that affect it.

The participation of civil society organisations is one of the dimensions of governance and the openness to the participation of social agents, in the structures of democratic governance, in the decision-making processes through dialogue and consultation is linked to the more advanced concept of participatory democracy.

THE PROCEDURE OF "PUBLIC DEBATE" AND ITS ASSOCIATED INSTITUTION, CNDP



Location: **France & Spain**
Stakeholders: **CNDP**
(**Commission Nationale du Débat Public**), **CFDT**
trade union (various
federations and regional
unions), **Syndex** and
local stakeholders in
France, social partners
and civil society
organisations in Spain

France: Public debate is a participatory and deliberative democratic mechanism, governed by the French Environment Code. It ensures citizens and stakeholders play an active role in shaping decisions on major industrial projects.

Spain:

in Puertollano,
restoration work on an
olive grove area
increased **olive trees**
from:

7,000

27,000

providing a
livelihood for
nearly:

from:
40

100
families



A concrete example of how public debate leads to tangible social and environmental benefits.

In France and Spain, public debate which includes trade unions and civil society ensures transparency and inclusiveness. By giving stakeholders full access to information and real influence, industrial projects address social, environmental, and economic concerns more responsibly.

THE PROCEDURE OF “PUBLIC DEBATE” AND ITS ASSOCIATED INSTITUTION, CNDP

Public debate is a procedure under the French Environment Code that allows everyone to take part in the process of developing a public policy or a project with major socio-economic or environmental implications. It is a participatory and deliberative democratic mechanism upstream of the decision-making process.

It is designed to enable debate not only on the characteristics and impact of a public policy or project, but also on its relevance or appropriateness, i.e. whether or not it should be introduced or carried out, and under which conditions.

Participation in public debate is a right that is guaranteed to everyone, and everyone must have access to complete and relevant information (principle of transparency) to enable effective participation.

A public debate is neither a referendum nor an opinion poll. It is an opportunity for all participants to express their points of view and have them taken into account. All arguments have the same importance and must be taken into account in the same way, regardless of the status of the people making them (principle of equivalence).

In this context, and regarding the Lithium mine project in the Allier region, the French trade union CFDT created a working group in the first half of 2024 group (at the initiative of the Mines and Metallurgy federation, with the Chemicals-Energy federation, the Construction and Wood federation, the Auvergne- Rhône-Alpes regional union Rhône-Alpes regional union, the Métallurgie and Chimie-Energie AURA unions and the Union Territoriale des Retraités de l'Allier, with the support of Syndex) to debate and issue an opinion on the project.

The working group has issued a document, to be presented for the public debate, stating: The need to strike the balance between general and local interests.

“The ecological transformation and decarbonisation of the economy are imperative if we are to contain climate change. France and Europe have a responsibility not to continue to export the environmental and social costs of their ecological and energy transition. While reducing them as much as possible, we must acknowledge that transition comes with negative externalities. For the CFDT, producing lithium in France will be more socially and environmentally friendly: because the standards and regulations are infinitely higher and more restrictive than elsewhere in the world, because extraction technologies are more advanced and energy is more decarbonised, and because civil society and the media can bring pressure to bear if things go wrong.

For the CFDT, it is important that this project is carried out with local stakeholders and trade union organisations, and not against them. While the interests of local residents must be taken into account, on the other hand, the population must be

aware that the ecological and energy transition requires resources. To build the social acceptability and operability of the project, the creation of a permanent forum for territorial dialogue, including representatives of trade unions (including those of subcontractors), local authorities, residents' associations, NGOs, will enable us to consolidate links and confidence, by continuing the debate during the construction phase, throughout the exploitation period and beyond."

It should be noted that at the time of finalizing our report, a government bill proposes to exempt all or part of industrial projects from the public debate phase, a move that seems to us to be at best damaging, if not dangerous.

For Spanish social partners the role of communication with all stakeholders is a key one; indeed, they consider that from the moment when it is known that a project is going to be carried out, the company must contact all the social forces in the area, informing them as transparently as possible of everything that is going to be done.

In other words, it is important to carry out an active and transparent communication process right from the beginning. This enables discussion and dialogue with social stakeholders to find out what their needs are, and how the project can help the socio-economic and environmental situation of the area. It is this type of work that gives confidence to civil society and improves the industry's image on a social level. In this process there is also an economic component, in which the municipalities involved in the project are paid significant amounts of money to compensate for the potential effects that the extractive activity could cause.

As an example, in Puertollano there were around 40 families living off 7,000 olive trees in the area to be exploited, and during the work process, the area was restored, so that, at the end, 27,000 olive trees remained in the area, providing a livelihood to nearly 100 families.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE MINING IN ANDALUSIA 2030

Location: **Spain (Andalusia)**
Stakeholders: **Andalusia regional government, employers' organisations, and trade unions.**



Strategy for **Sustainable Mining in Andalusia 2030** (SSMA 2030) was approved on **1 June 2021**



Social partners directly represented in the working group

SSMA 2030 is a **governance model that puts people at the centre of mining policy**. It ensures environmental, economic, and social sustainability by actively including employers and trade unions in shaping, implementing, and monitoring the regional strategy. The direct involvement of social partners guarantees that the strategy is **socially inclusive, environmentally responsible, and territorially integrated**.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE DEFINITION OF THE STRATEGY FOR A SUSTAINABLE MINING IN ANDALUSIA IN 2030

On 1 June 2021, the Andalusian Regional Government approved the Strategy for Sustainable Mining in Andalusia 2030 (SSMA 2030)¹⁴ designed as “a lever for economic development, which seeks the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the Andalusian mining sector, putting people at the centre of mining policy and seeking the greatest added value in the territory.”

“The strategy must advocate for the consolidation of a strengthened ecosystem of auxiliary companies and for innovative, efficient, circular mining with greater energy efficiency, electrified and with a lower carbon footprint, which has the most advanced security measures, is more integrated into the territory and is positively valued by the population for its contribution to the development of the region.”

The governance of the implementation includes the participation of social partners by stating that “Andalusian mining social partners will play a leading role in the implementation of SSMA 2030, because they will be the ones to carry out most of the actions.”

Indeed, the working group in charge of the implementation, the monitoring and the follow-up of the strategy includes amongst its members two representatives of the most representative employers’ organisations and two representatives of the most representative trade unions.

USING THE IRMA STANDARD AS A LEVER TO ENHANCE SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The mining and extractive industries have faced mounting criticism. Key concerns include:

- Social impact: health problems and deaths among workers and local communities due to mining accidents.
- Environmental impact: CO2 emissions, water pollution, and biodiversity loss.
- Financial impact.

These criticisms have spread and grown since the 1970s, particularly as the concept of sustainable development gained prominence. They affected the image of an industry which, between 1970 and 2000, also had to contend with a period of historically low raw material prices and a decline in mining profitability. The concept of responsible mining thus appeared to improve mining practices as well as the industry image.

Initiatives have emerged since 1998 to make mines more responsible, bringing together multiple stakeholders:

- In 1998, nine of the biggest global mining companies agreed to consider mineral industry stakeholder interests alongside those of shareholders, establishing voluntary standards

¹⁴ https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/sites/default/files/inline-files/2023/08/Estrategia_Minera_EMSA_2030_Aprobada_CG.pdf

- In the 2000s, the members of the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) engaged in an “ICMM Framework for Sustainable Development” and the 1st International Conference on Sustainable Development Indicators for the Mining Industry (SDIMI) took place
- The “Milos Declaration” was adopted in 2003 at the 14th Annual Meeting of the Society of Mining Professors, emphasising the desire to contribute to the sustainable development of the mineral industry through the use of scientific, technical, educational and research skills
- Tiffany & Co, Earthworks and WWF brought together investors, sellers, insurers and experts in the field and published in 2005 the “Framework for Responsible Mining”. Derived from international agreements and seeking the respect of human rights, 10 principles were enacted.
- In 2012, Robert Goodland, a former senior advisor on environmental issues at the World Bank, defined the eight principles of “responsible mining” and related good practices.
- In 2014, IRMA (Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance) published a draft version of standards for responsible mining. The standard defined best practices in relation to the social and environmental aspects of mining and focused on the importance of working conditions and respect for the rights and aspirations of impacted communities in addition to environmental issues.

The focus has shifted from recognizing the importance of stakeholders’ interests in 1998, to creating a multistakeholder standard that highlights the need for “broader community support”, with the prominence of both the challenges and the approach of responsible mining. Social dialogue with the actors affected has become necessary to obtain the now essential social license to operate. This focus on the local communities’ rights and interests is part of an overall context of corporate social responsibility. The benefits for companies are twofold because this social license to operate gives them better access to financing, reduced insurance premium and better profitability by reducing the risk of conflicts.¹⁵

There is, however, still no universally accepted definition of responsible mining. This lack of a common definition reflects differences in standards and approaches:

- Globally recognized CSR standards, like ISO 26000, which are not specific to the mining industry.
- Initiatives like IRMA offer mining-specific standards, though few actors fully implement them.
- Voluntary commitments by mining industries without independent verification, which lead to accusations of merely being public relations exercises.

¹⁵ Chevrel S., Charles N., Christmann P., Lamouille B., Blanchard F., Guillaenau J.-C., Kister P. (2017) – Le concept de « mine responsable ». Parangonnage des initiatives mondiales. Collection « La mine en France ». Tome 9, 101 p., 6 fig., 3 tabl., 14 ann.

INITIATIVE FOR RESPONSIBLE MINING ASSURANCE (IRMA STANDARD)

Location: **Global**

Stakeholders: **Mining companies , NGOs, trade unions and affected communities.**



Created in 2006

Published a draft version of its standards for responsible mining.



2014

Developed through a **public consultation** process with over **2,000 comments from over 100 individuals/organisations.**



October 2023

94 sites were engaged in the IRMA process globally, with **10 sites** having an independent Assessment Completed status.

IRMA'S 4 PRINCIPLES:

- 1. BUSINESS INTEGRITY**
- 2. PLANNING FOR POSITIVE LEGACIES**
- 3. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**
- 4. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

IRMA is a globally recognised standard for responsible mining, defining best practices for social and environmental responsibility. It includes workers' perspective and emphasises working conditions and respect for community rights.

INITIATIVE FOR RESPONSIBLE MINING ASSURANCE (IRMA STANDARD)

Created in 2006, the IRMA standard was developed through a public consultation process (receiving more than 2,000 comments from over 100 individuals/organisations), by a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), companies that need to source minerals and metals for the products they manufacture and sell, trade union organisations, affected communities and mining companies.

As of the end of October 2023, 94 sites were engaged in the IRMA process including 74 mining companies, in six different continents and concerning more than 50 minerals.

In 2024, many ArcelorMittal sites were at the self-assessment step (first step). The only sites in Europe that are undergoing an IRMA assessment are Emily from Imerys (Beauvoir-France) and the two sites of Le Nickel-SLN from Eramet (New Caledonia-France), but they only are at the self-assessment stage.

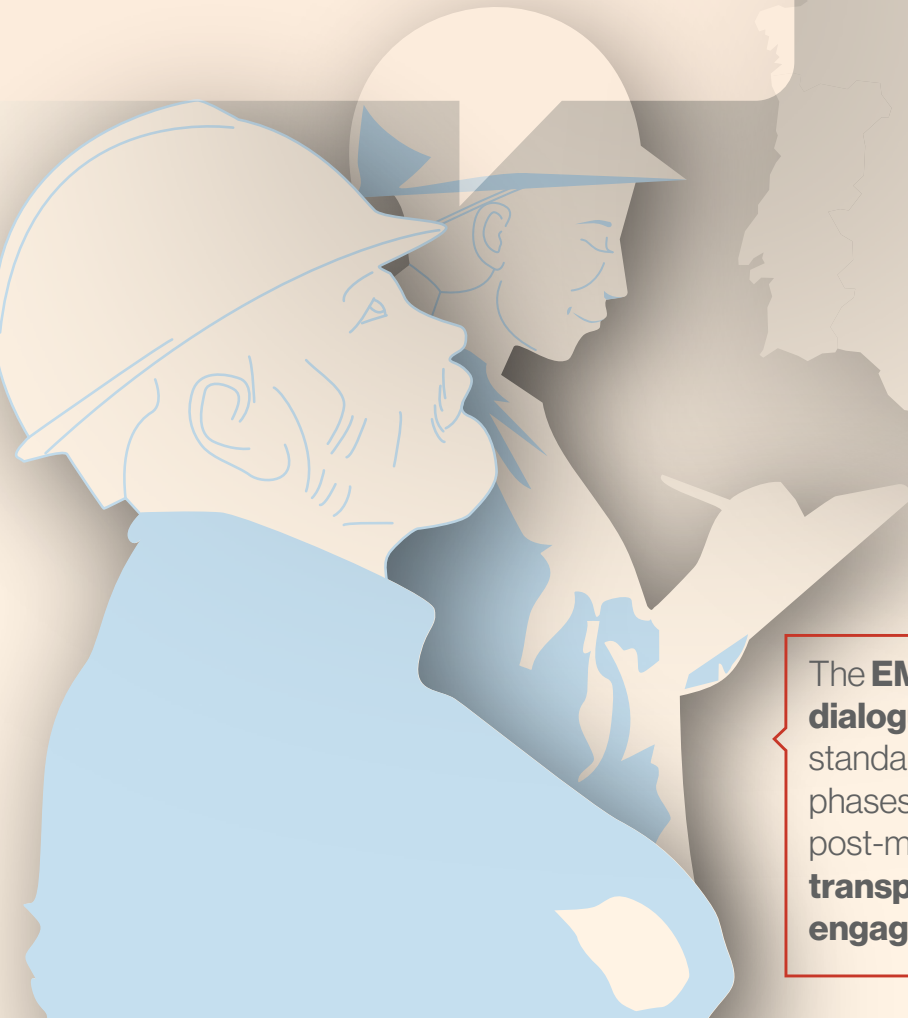
There are currently only 10 sites with an independent Assessment Completed status (South Africa, Brazil, Chile, Zimbabwe).

EMILI PROJECT: IMERY'S LITHIUM MINING PROJECT

Location: **France (Beauvoir)**
Stakeholders: **Project promoter (Imerys), CNDP (Commission Nationale du Débat Public), civil society organisations, trade unions, local and regional authorities, and IRMA auditors**

The EMILI project aims to be the **1st European mining project to reach IRMA's standard**, with a projected operational **lifespan of 25 years**

First mining project in Metropolitan France, aiming to reduce dependence on external raw material sources



The **EMILI project** sets a benchmark for **social dialogue** by adopting the rigorous IRMA standard from the very beginning. Covering all phases (study, consultation, exploitation, and post-mining), this approach ensures **high transparency** and **continuous stakeholder engagement** throughout the mine's lifecycle.

EMILI PROJECT: IMERYS LITHIUM MINING PROJECT

The EMILI project would be carried out in compliance with the international IRMA standard for responsible mining. This is one of the most demanding frameworks in terms of social and environmental performance criteria. The uniqueness of this standard lies in its application from the initial design of the project, covering the study, consultation, exploitation, and post-mining phases. It includes, among other things, a very high level of transparency and regular exchanges with stakeholders throughout the life of the mine. Imerys would integrate this data into its societal performance plan for EMILI, co-developed with stakeholders after the public debate phase.

IRMA grants its certification to mining projects after confirmation by independent auditors of the proper implementation of its practices, particularly regarding the environment and consultation.

The territorial dialogue process is structured across the different stages of the mine's life:

- Before exploitation, a public debate is organised by the Commission Nationale du Débat Public (CNDP) to ensure transparency and enable citizen participation.
- During the exploitation phase, Imerys maintains ongoing local dialogue to minimise environmental and social impacts. This includes addressing potential nuisances and proposing corrective measures in real time, backed by ongoing monitoring and strict adherence to regulatory standards.
- After closure, post-mining site rehabilitation will be guided by three main objectives: ensuring the long-term land stability, preventing erosion, and promoting the ecological restoration of vegetation in harmony with surrounding ecosystems and local uses. The post-mining land use will be defined in consultation with stakeholders, in line with IRMA's participatory principles and the requirements of the new French Mining Code.

The EMILI project is designed for a projected operational 25-year lifespan. However, this does not preclude an ongoing public discussion about the overall desirability of such projects. Recent investigative journalism has raised questions about whether the fundamental and often unavoidable externalities of extractive industries are truly aligned with today's social and environmental priorities.

In this context, the relocation of extraction activities—despite their relative environmental advantage in France compared with other regions—can only be socially accepted if framed within a coherent and credible policy of ecological sobriety. As long as car manufacturers continue to favour SUV-type vehicles and offshore parts of their production to low-cost countries, the legitimacy of reopening or developing new mining sites must be underpinned by stronger public interest justifications, responsible consumption strategies, and sustained dialogue at all levels.

2. HOW WORKING CONDITIONS AND QUALITY JOBS INCREASE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE SECTOR

From a global point of view, attractiveness and purpose-driven work are becoming increasingly important as global issues such as climate issues become more and more prevalent, especially for younger generations. It is not a question of green or social washing but rather of highlighting values related to the professions, the meaning of work, and ensuring the recognition of professional and social achievements.

Guaranteeing good working conditions and quality jobs is a major way of strengthening the attractiveness of the sector. This issue is at the heart of recent European policies¹⁶ and of social partners¹⁷ concerns.

Good working conditions and quality jobs can be guaranteed in several ways:

- Increasing the social protection of workers
- Creating the conditions of a good working environment in terms of occupational health and safety
- Ensuring a good work-life balance
- Ensuring fair wages and remuneration

Social dialogue has led to best practices in each of the areas mentioned above as we will see below.

Additionally, regular communication aimed at both the public and target populations (young people and women in particular) could help to make the sector more visible and attractive by focusing on:

- The role of the sector in the twin transition.
- The potential for job creation in response to skills shortages (technical or otherwise).
- Inter- and intra-sectoral bridges for jobs that are in decline or under pressure, to attract profiles from related, declining sectors.
- Highlighting the technical and technological dimensions of the jobs in the sector.

¹⁶ On 17th November 2017, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission formally proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights. One of the main principles of the pillar is to achieve fair working conditions. This covers secure and adaptable employment, wages, employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals, social dialogue and involvement of workers, work-life balance, as well as a healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection.

¹⁷ The Joint recommendations of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Extractive Industries states that “*Quality jobs*” means work that provides fair wages, ensures work security via standard employment contracts, and access to social protection. There should also be access to quality lifelong learning opportunities, good working conditions in safe and healthy workplaces, reasonable working time and a good work-life balance”

2.1. BEST PRACTICES ARISING FROM SOCIAL DIALOGUE AIMED AT IMPROVING ATTRACTIVENESS AND TALENT RETENTION

AGREEMENTS ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

A renewed approach to social protection should be pursued to be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals: ensuring equal social protection rights for equal work to people in all forms of employment; upgrading working conditions and adequacy of social protection for all, in a rationale of upward convergence; ensuring solidarity and fairness in social protection by designing collective systems to which people contribute equally and proportionally to their capacity and benefit from according to their needs, with adequate minimum provisions and fall-back safety nets.

In this context and as stated by the ILO:

“Unions also have transcendent roles and responsibilities. Their advocacy can tip the balance in favour of current efforts to extend social protection. By working towards universal social protection as a key element of the new social contract, they can take the lead in rebuilding societies that prioritize the welfare of all their members, while continuing to defend hard-won membership rights.”

ERAMET GLOBAL CARE

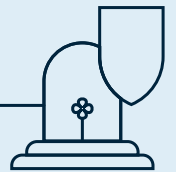
Location: **France**
Stakeholders: **Social partners**
Main Objective: **Align social
dialogue and concrete
outputs in social protection.**

Applies to Eramet employees across
13 countries where the Group has
subsidiaries



Common set of guarantees in 3
main areas:

- **death cover**
- **health and
prevention**
- **maternity and
women's
conditions**



In June 2024, Eramet and its Global Forum composed of workers' and employers' representatives launched Eramet Global Care, a worldwide social protection programme covering health, death, prevention, maternity, and women's conditions, demonstrating a commitment to raising living standards for all workers.

ERAMET GLOBAL CARE

In June 2024, the Eramet Global Forum and Eramet signed an initial agreement to set up a common global social protection base: Eramet Global Care.

Signed by Eramet's management and employee representatives of the Eramet Global Forum, the agreement defines a common set of guarantees for death cover, health and prevention, maternity and women's conditions.

This is the first agreement signed by the social partners worldwide. The World Forum serves both as a forum for information and consultation, and as a negotiating body.

These guarantees:

- Apply to all Eramet employees across the 13 countries where the Group has subsidiaries owned directly or indirectly at more than 50%.
- Will be overseen by a dedicated committee, with goal of full implementation across all subsidiaries by 31 December 2026 at the latest.

The social partners also agreed on a negotiating agenda for the coming years. Two main challenges have been identified: the question of resources, especially given the downturn in the group's results in 2024, and the difficulty of negotiating operational arrangements worldwide.

Additional challenges include: a follow-up committee to monitor implementation of the agreement in each country; strong cultural differences between countries with numerous agreements and different negotiation traditions (e.g. negotiation of 10 agreements a year in France, but only one framework agreement in Gabon and two in Senegal); willingness to negotiate supplementary pension schemes, but complicated by differing legal structures of different countries; and management proposes to negotiate on the quality of life at work such as providing a cafeteria and a rest room for each site.

Our interviews with representatives revealed that the aim of the negotiations was not only to raise social protection standards for workers in countries with less advanced frameworks (mainly the African countries where Eramet operates), but also to improve the overall standards of living of all workers. The negotiations must enable employees, even in countries with the strongest legislation, agreements or practices, to benefit from improved standards.

AGREEMENTS ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Occupational Health & Safety represents a major issue for the extractive industries in terms of attractiveness, competitiveness, sustainability as well as the social license to operate.

On this issue, a virtuous circle has been identified: social dialogue enhances working conditions and safety, which in turn enhances profitability. Social dialogue makes it possible to balance what initially seems an uneven equation.

Meaningful social dialogue and common commitment form the foundation of a preventative safety and health culture. Through social dialogue, all stakeholders actively participate in all phases of the OSH decision making processes (these range from developing and revising

OSH policy and regulatory frameworks to address persistent and new OSH challenges, to promoting compliance mechanisms at the workplace level).

Thus, social dialogue not only improves the quality of OSH policies and strategies, but it also plays a vital role in fostering ownership and commitment, thereby paving the way for their rapid and more effective implementation.

Within the scope of the current project, the results of the questionnaire¹⁸ sent to the social partners indicate that collective bargaining addresses health and safety but focuses primarily on issues regarding physical environment while other issues as psychosocial risks are not so widely covered.

¹⁸ See the annex for the data.

NEPSI SOCIAL DIALOGUE AGREEMENT ON CRYSTALLINE SILICA

Location: **Europe**

Stakeholders: **European Social Partners and European Institutions**

Main Objective: **Protect workers' health and minimise exposure to respirable crystalline silica(RCS).**

Key points of the agreement: **protect employees' health, minimise and prevent exposure to respirable crystalline silica, raise awareness and knowledge of potential health effects of RCS.**

This European multi-sectoral agreement puts social dialogue at its core, bringing together workers and employers to protect employees from respirable crystalline silica. Through shared best practices, a Good Practice Guide, and KPIs to monitor progress, it shows how structured dialogue can set and achieve high health and safety standards across Europe.



AGREEMENT ON WORKERS HEALTH PROTECTION THROUGH THE GOOD HANDLING AND USE OF CRYSTALLINE SILICA AND PRODUCTS CONTAINING IT

In 2006, the European Network on Silica (NEPSI) adopted a European multisectoral Social Dialogue Agreement on “Workers’ Health Protection Through the Good Handling and Use of Crystalline Silica and Products Containing it”.

The NEPSI Social Dialogue Agreement aims to:

-  Protect employees’ health.
-  Minimize and prevent exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) at the workplace by applying good practices.
-  Raise awareness and knowledge of potential health effects of RCS and of good practices.

The NEPSI Social Dialogue Agreement includes a Good Practice Guide, draws on examples from numerous companies and monitors the application of the Agreement & Good Practices at sites by consolidating different Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

THE SWEDISH MODEL

Location: **Sweden**

Stakeholders: **Sectoral social partners**

Main Objective: **Demonstrate that a system founded on regular collective bargaining, without legal regulation, can provide strong outcomes.**

Sweden 3rd place in Europe for employee well-being (Eurofound's ECS study, 2019)

85% of organisations conduct occupational risk assessments, compared to 75% EU-27 average (EU-OSHA ESENER survey 2019)

1931
Adalen riots

1997
Manufacturing Industry Agreement

2015
AFS 2015: 4 introduced provision on the organisational and social work environment, with legal force. Collective agreements are negotiated periodically.

The Swedish model shows how voluntary collective agreements and strong social dialogue, built on trust and cooperation, lead to good working conditions, high worker involvement in risk assessment, and influence on emerging legal standards.



THE SWEDISH MODEL: NEGOTIATION OVER LAWS BUT A HIGH LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

The “Swedish model” is based on voluntary agreements between employees and employers that regulate all the aspects of pay, rights and working conditions in the workplace.

Historically, this model emerged from the social compromises that followed the Adalen riots in 1931, a period marked by social unrest that led to violence.

It is a system based on a high level of trade union memberships and a culture of self-regulation and minimum state intervention, seen as a path to promoting competitiveness.

This compromise is based on a generous general system of social protection and strong trade unions and organized employer associations, an active family support policy and a flexible labour legislation where law plays a subsidiary role to collective agreements. The sociologist Gosta Esping Andersen has identified the Swedish model as one of the three ideal types of welfare state in Europe.

The model is governed by the 1997 Manufacturing Industry Agreement (Industriavtalet). Collective agreements on wages and employment conditions are negotiated at sector-level, with provisions for local-level improvements.

There is no legal regulation (this has remained stable over the years), and sector-level collective agreements are negotiated periodically (generally every three years). Negotiations are initiated at least three months before the expiry of the agreements in force, in accordance with the standards set by the Industriavtalet. To facilitate smooth negotiations, “impartial negotiation leaders” (Opartiska ordförandena, Opo) may be brought in early in the process.

Some of the strengths of this model are:

- Quality of social dialogue and trust in management: data from analyses conducted by Eurofound and EU-OSHA ranks Sweden among the top European countries.
- Trust and cooperation: Eurofound's ECS study (2019) makes Sweden one of the European leaders in management-employee collaboration.
- Well-being in the workplace: the studies cited above position Sweden in third place in Europe for employee well-being. It is also in the top quarter of European countries for perceived organisational performance.
- Occupational risk assessment: the EU-OSHA ESENER survey (2019) places Sweden among the European countries that conduct occupational risk assessments. Thus 85% of organisations, public and private, make regular payments in Sweden, compared with 75% on average in the EU-27. Sweden is the country of Europe where the involvement of workers in determining the measures to be taken to manage occupational risks is the highest.

However, some challenges have also been identified:

- Supporting the ecological and demographic “twin transitions” occupies a very large part of the agenda of the social partners.

-  The predominance of collective agreements over legal acts does not mean that legislation is non-existent or unnecessary. The growing challenges related to psychosocial risks bear witness to this. Their increases in recent years have led the Swedish Working Environment Authority (Arbetsmiljöverket, Labour Inspectorate) to adopt the 2015:4 provision on the organisational and social working environment (AFS 2015:4 provision), which has a legal regulatory scope.
-  This provision implies that the organisational and social factors of occupational risks (ability to express difficulties and ask for help, internal climate, knowledge of risks, etc.) must be considered in companies. It integrates many dimensions such as the work environment, the workload and the level of autonomy that workers can enjoy. The Arbetsmiljöverket has published a practical guide to the application of the AFS provision 2015:4116. The Swedish Working Environment Authority ensures the monitoring of the implementation of these obligations in both the private and public sectors.

BELGIUM: EWC DRIVING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



Location: **Belgium**
Stakeholders: **Management and trade unions**
Main Objective: **Share best practices in the European Works Council, with a focus on Occupational Health and Safety.**

Two major Belgian lime groups (Lhoist and Carmeuse), each with **100+ sites** and **between 5,300 and 6,650 employees**

Lhoist : **5-day English language and specialised training** for representatives over 2 years to improve dialogue between countries' representatives

Lhoist's Green Lime project involves **4 select committee meetings** with OHS focus

Carmeuse: **annual site visits and PPE benchmarking exercises**

The EWCs showcase effective **social dialogue**, with health and safety issues central to discussions. Investments in language and specialised training (Lhoist) and practices like focus on OSH meetings and PPE benchmarking (Carmeuse) demonstrate a collaborative commitment to health and safety and cross-country knowledge sharing, going beyond formal agreements.

CARMEUSE'S AND LHOIST'S EWC

Lhoist and Carmeuse are two major Belgian groups in the lime industry. They are both highly internationalized entities, each operating over 100 sites and employing between 6,650 and 5,300 employees respectively.

Both EWC operating agreements and operating are rated as excellent by the staff representatives we interviewed.

As far as Lhoist is concerned, we should note:

A 5-day English training over two years:

- First year: language course focused on professional and informal communication aiming at learning English to facilitate informal dialogue among representatives.
- Second year: Specialised training addressing local issues, site visits to understand the impact of projects, exchanges with local teams to strengthen international coordination. The main objective is to explore specific topics (e.g. decarbonisation, just transition) with experts and visit a production site.

Green lime project with ArcelorMittal in Dunkirk will have repercussions on Belgian sites.

- Four select committee meetings
- EHS is considered as a key issue, and delegates are very keen to share good practices within the EWC.

Highlights from Carmeuse include:

-  Representatives from different countries may substitute for one another, ensuring all seats are filled during meetings.
-  Annual site visits with benchmarking exercises with the members of the EWC to assess PPE on sites to prevent discrepancies in PPE usage or reductions in PPE usage.

While the formal content of the two agreements are relatively standard, the Belgian representatives stressed that in practice the level of social dialogue was very satisfactory, and that health and safety issues were often at the heart of the social agenda.

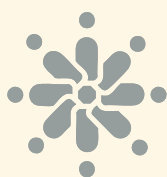
Areas for improvement: there is an increasing reliance on videoconferencing for meetings and interviews, which risks reducing the effectiveness of both formal and informal exchanges within the EWC . This trend has been explicitly criticized by trade union representatives.

MINING SAFETY COMMISSION

Location: **Spain**

Stakeholders: **Trade unions, employers' organisations, mining authorities, technical experts**

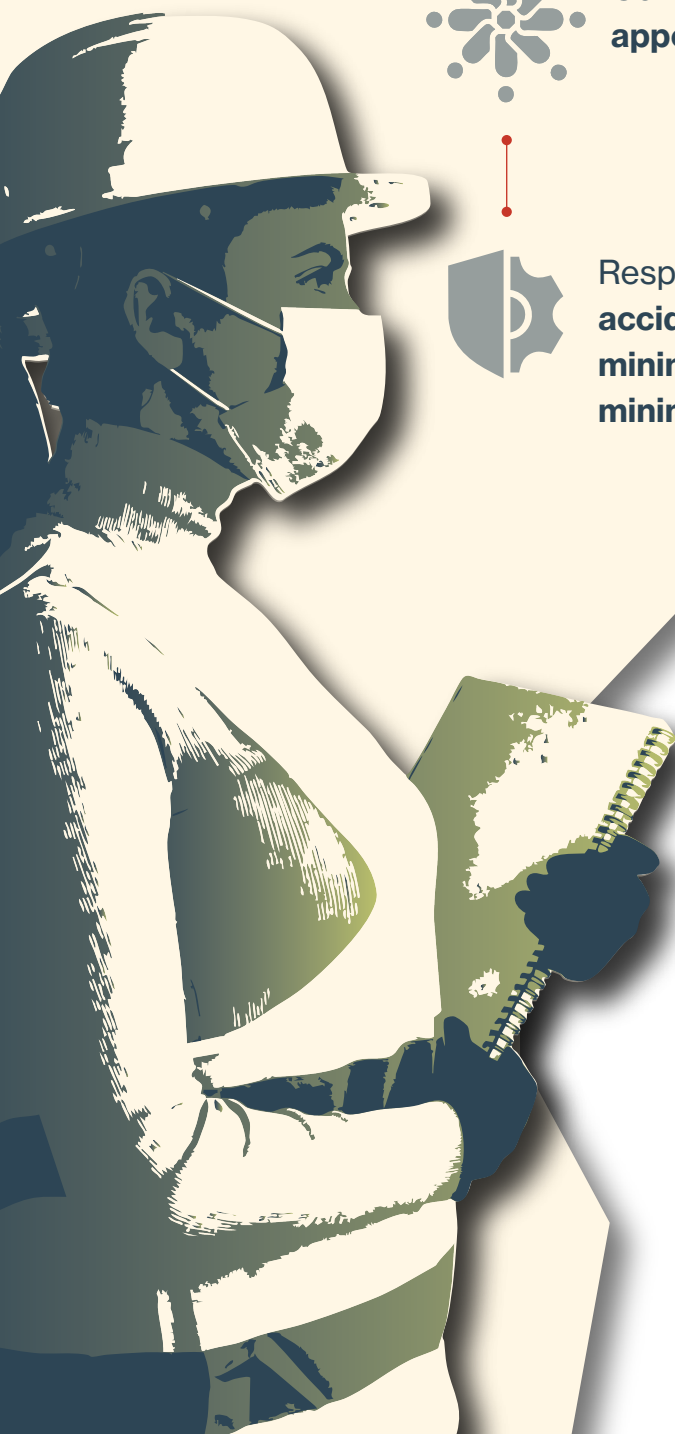
Main Objective: **Establish a permanent technical commission to improve occupational health and safety in the mining sector, with direct trade union involvement.**



Commission members include **six technicians appointed by trade unions.**



Responsibilities cover studying **safe mine operation, accident prevention, promoting safety campaigns, advising mining authorities, drawing up regulations, and approving mining equipment.**



This institutional mechanism stands out as a best practice by embedding trade union-appointed technicians directly into the regulatory process. Their involvement ensures that workers' perspectives shape safety standards, leading to more effective policies and stronger implementation.

MINING SAFETY COMMISSION

In Spain occupational health and safety in the mining sector is overseen by the “Comision de Seguridad Minera” whose responsibilities include:

- *“Studying, reporting and proposing conditions for safe mine operation, ..., and in particular when the application of new methods of operation or a higher degree of mechanisation may affect safety,*
- *Studying and reporting on the measures necessary to prevent accidents in mines, explosions of firedamp and other gases and the ignition of coal dust.*
- *Promoting and propagating a permanent campaign for the prevention of accidents in mines through the guidelines derived in this sense from the analysis of periodic statistics on mining accidents.*
- *Providing advice to mining authorities, at their request, on all matters relating to mining safety.*
- *Drawing up appropriate regulations and standards for the proper operation of mines and technical instructions to keep them permanently up to date.*
- *Reporting on a mandatory basis, based on the results of official verifications and tests, the approval of mining equipment in general and electrical equipment for deflagration atmospheres, as well as to propose mandatory standards and criteria to be followed in the above-mentioned tests when such standards do not exist.*
- *Reporting on all safety-related matters affecting the mining sector and safety in general.”*

Trade unions play an important role on the functioning of this Commission as its members include six technicians appointed by the trade unions, ensuring that workers’ perspectives are reflected in setting up the regulatory framework of occupational health and safety in the mining sector.

AGREEMENTS ON WORKING TIME

Working time is a key dimension of work organisation due to its impact on the quality of work and the lives of workers.

Today finding a fair and suitable balance between work, family life, leisure as well as other social commitments is a major challenge for all workers. Improving work-life balance provisions is therefore key to helping to ensure well-being as well as more financial security for workers, specifically women and to concretely counter-act the gendered “care-penalty”.

The EU has recognized the importance of reconciliation between work and family life and has enacted legislation and developed policy in this area (mainly the Work-Life Balance directive). Across sectors, collective bargaining increasingly includes:

- Flexible working arrangements (time and/or place of work).
- Securing time and payments to encourage men to take-up family-related leave: paternity leave (time allocations and/or payments), family related economic incentives, childcare arrangements, long-term care and parental leave, paid short-term care leave or even training.

SECTORAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT ON WORKING TIME



Location: **Belgium**

Stakeholders: **Employers' organisations and trade unions**

Main Objective: **Improve working time arrangements and introduce additional paid leave.**

- Average working time set at 36 hours/week across the sector.
- At Lhoist and Carmeuse: 35 hours/week officially, 40 hours in practice with 30 days of compensatory leave + 20 days of annual leave + 2 extra paid days off.
- Significant improvement in work-life balance.



This sectoral agreement shows how social dialogue can go beyond legal standards to deliver tangible benefits for workers. By negotiating reduced working hours and generous leave, it enhances well-being and sets a benchmark for responsible employment practices in the extractive sector.

SECTORAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT ON WORKING TIME

The average weekly working time in Joint Sub-Committee 102.09 (industry of uncut limestone quarries, lime kilns, dolomite quarries and dolomite kilns) is set at 36 hours on an annual basis, in accordance with Article 4 of the Royal Decree of 20 September 2024 making the collective labour agreement of 27 November 2023 mandatory.

At Lhoist and Carmeuse, the working week is 35 hours, but employees actually work 40 hours per week. This generates 30 days of compensatory leave per year in addition to the 20 days of annual leave. There are also two additional paid days off negotiated with the employer (27 September and 4 December).

This allows for a better work-life balance.

AGREEMENTS ON WAGES AND REMUNERATION

Wages and remuneration are a key indicator of value to employees as transparent and equitable salary practices not only foster a sense of fairness and motivation among employees but also play a significant role in attracting and retaining qualified personnel.

To this respect, social dialogue plays a major role in guaranteeing decent working conditions and fair wages. Social dialogue can strengthen policy coherence across government actors by balancing economic growth and social progress, ultimately upholding the goal of decent work for all.

A good example of the link between social partners and policymakers is the recent EU Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, adopted in 2022, which has already prompted several national governments to reassess the adequacy of their minimum wages, resulting in wage increases for millions of low paid workers.

STRENGTHENING SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN MINING THROUGH THE EU MINIMUM WAGE DIRECTIVE

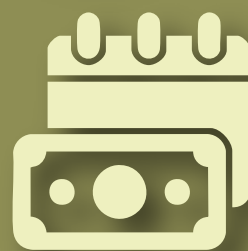
Location: **Hungary**

Stakeholders: **Employers' and workers' organisations and the government**

Main Objective: **Boost collective bargaining in the mining sector by aligning with the EU Minimum Wage Directive.**

A joint committee of **10 members (5 per social partner)** was created to lead negotiations.

Hungary's collective bargaining coverage is **below 80%**, triggering an action plan under the EU directive.



Tripartite agreement signed:

- Minimum wage to increase by **9% in 2025, 13% in 2026, and 14% in 2027.**
- Guaranteed minimum wage to rise by **7% in 2025.**

This example shows how EU-level initiatives can catalyse national action. Through structured dialogue and joint commitment, Hungary is strengthening wage policies and promoting fair working conditions in the mining sector.

STRENGTHENING SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN MINING THROUGH THE EU MINIMUM WAGE DIRECTIVE

In Hungary the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive follows the path fixed by the directive i.e.

“Promoting and facilitating collective bargaining on wages: All Member States should take measures for this purpose, such as promoting the capacity-building of social partners to engage in collective bargaining on wage-setting. In addition, Member States where the collective bargaining coverage rate is below 80% need an action plan to promote collective bargaining.”

The Hungarian Mining Association and the Trade Union of Mine, Energy and Industrial Workers have set up a joint committee composed of five members from each organisation, to promote the development of sector-wide collective agreements on basic benefits on:

- Identification of jobs specific to the mining sector.
- Identification of vocational training needs for the sector.
- Definition of sector-specific wages.
- Definition and evaluation of key jobs and determination of benchmark wages.
- Assessment of sectoral wage cost-bearing capacity.
- Definition of minimum OHSA obligations for extractive industries.

Additionally, with the implementation of the European Minimum Wage Directive, the Permanent Consultative Forum of the Private Sector and the Government (VKF) has been formally designated as the consultative wage-setting body, reinforcing its role. As a result, at the end of November 2024, Hungary’s government, employers, and trade unions signed an agreement on minimum wages for 2025–2027. This deal establishes significant increases for both the minimum wage and the guaranteed minimum wage over the period. The minimum wage will rise by 9% in 2025, with further increases of 13% in 2026 and 14% in 2027, bringing it to HUF 290,800 in 2025. The guaranteed minimum wage will also increase by 7% in 2025. A review clause allows for adjustments should economic conditions shift during the agreement period.

3. INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Introduce more open, egalitarian and diversified human resources policies, with a particular focus on women: setting a target for women's participation in training programmes, improving customers' human resources policies and performance levels, and organising awareness-raising activities to promote the role of women in the sector, will be key to building a more diverse pool of future talent.

In this respect, one of the latest policy briefs of the EITI (Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative) states that

“Beyond upholding the principles of equality and equity, promoting gender diversity is vital for sustainable development in the extractive industries. There is evidence that ensuring women’s perspectives, experiences and skills at all levels of the industry can significantly improve the sector’s performance. Recruiting and investing in women can bring unique perspectives and approaches to problem-solving that can lead to more innovative, effective and sustainable solutions. A diverse workforce contributes to broader social and economic benefits that support sustainable development efforts”¹⁹.

Within the scope of the current project, the results of the questionnaire²⁰ sent to the social partners show that the issue of diversity, inclusion and gender is still a challenge as they still receive limited attention in social dialogue.

However, good practices are developing inclusion principles, whether or not formalised in collective agreements. For instance, in Sweden, trade unions and employers agree that risk prevention for pregnant women is the outcome of good practice resulting from social dialogue. In this way, risk assessment no longer only concerns access to the workplace for pregnant workers, but also their working conditions and aptitudes.

¹⁹ Policy brief “On equal terms. Supporting an inclusive extractive sector in the energy transition” EITI, October 2023.

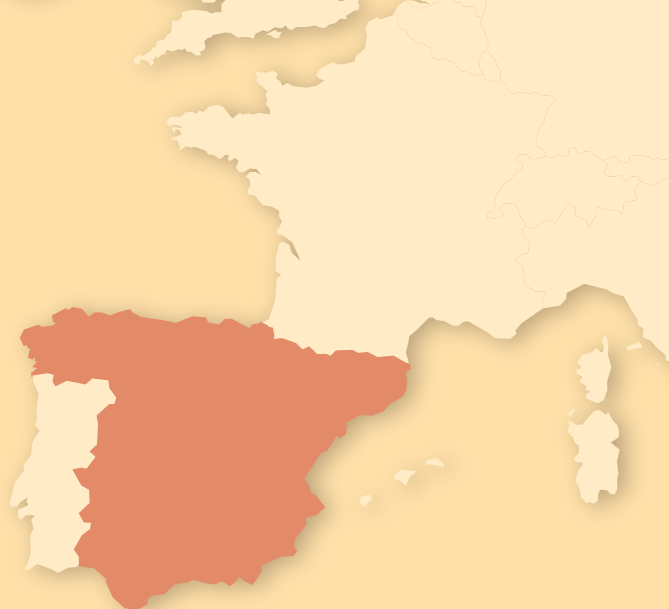
²⁰ See the annex for the data.

EQUALITY PLANS

Location: **Spain**

Stakeholders: **Social partners, companies and government**

Main Objective: **Require companies to promote gender equality through a regulatory framework.**



Phase 1. Launch of the process of drawing up the equality plan: Communication and opening of negotiations and constitution of the negotiating committee.

Phase 2. Diagnosis: compilation and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to determine the degree of integration of equality between women and men in the company.

Phase 3. Design, approval and registration of the equality plan: definition of objectives, design of measures, establishment of monitoring and evaluation indicators, implementation schedule, approval and registration of the plan.

Phase 4. Implementation and monitoring of the equality plan: verification of the degree of development and fulfilment of the measures and evaluation of results.

Phase 5. Evaluation of the equality plan: assessment of the degree to which the objectives have been achieved, the results and the impact the plan has had on the company.

Required for companies with **50 or more employees**, or when established by collective agreement or labour authority.

Process involves **five phases** from launch to evaluation: workers' representatives and/or trade unions participate **in all phases**.

Phase 1. Launch of the process of drawing up the equality plan: Communication and opening of negotiations and constitution of the negotiating committee.

Phase 3. Design, approval and registration of the equality plan: During the design of the equality plan, the trade unions participate in the definition of objectives, specific measures and implementation schedules.

Phase 4. Implementation and monitoring of the equality plan: in this phase, the unions work together with the company to ensure that the established measures are carried out as planned. They also act as intermediaries to resolve any conflicts or difficulties that may arise.

Phase 5. Evaluation of the equality plan: The trade unions participate in the periodic evaluation of the equality plan, analysing the results obtained and proposing improvements to address new needs or challenges.

Spanish Equality Plans are a best practice in inclusive policymaking. They require continuous involvement of trade unions across all five phases – design, implementation, and evaluation – ensuring gender equality measures are co-created, effectively applied, and constantly improved. This approach goes beyond compliance to foster real inclusion and diverse workplaces.

3.1. BEST PRACTICES ARISING FROM SOCIAL DIALOGUE TO FOSTER PROFESSIONAL EQUALITY

In Spain, companies are required to draw up and implement an equality plan whenever:

-  They have 50 or more employees.
-  When such an obligation is established by the applicable collective agreement.
-  When the labour authority has agreed in a sanctioning procedure to replace accessory sanctions with the drawing up and implementation of such a plan.

Any company, however, may voluntarily develop and implement an equality plan or other measures to promote gender equality. The process of drawing up and implementing equality plans is carried out in five phases and there is a strong participation of workers' representatives and/or trade unions in each step of the process.

4. INNOVATION

The mining industry is undergoing a profound transformation fuelled by technological advancements and a shift towards sustainability. This marks a pivotal moment in its evolution to ensure long-term viability and environmental responsibility.

Today and as environmental concerns become increasingly paramount, the mining industry is adopting technologies that minimize its ecological footprint. Innovations in water treatment, waste management, and emission reduction are redefining standards for environmental responsibility.

While formal social dialogue regarding innovation remains limited, some best practices emerged from the 2024 Euromines Safety Awards:

- 
ABB's automated robot charger pilot solution is a step towards safer underground mining. By automating the dangerous and complex process of charging explosives, this robotic system, developed in collaboration with **Boliden, LKAB, Forcit, and LKAB Kimit**, ensures the distance of workers from high-risk zones. The solution sets a new standard in both operational efficiency and safety.
- 
Hellas Gold – Eldorado Gold has developed a new safety training with their immersive virtual reality and augmented reality platforms. These technologies provide miners with the realistic training scenarios, enabling them to practice operating heavy machinery and handle complex tasks in a risk-free environment. This cutting-edge approach enhances workforce preparedness while maintaining safety standards.
- 
Cobre Las Cruces – First Quantum Mineral has introduced a next-generation ground control system that detects potential hazards earlier than ever before, providing enhanced protection against cave-ins and rockfalls. This advanced technology reinforces safety measures for workers in underground mining.
- 
Sandfire MATSA has launched a real-time safety application that allows miners to stay in constant communication, even when deep underground. This digitised approach significantly enhances both team safety and operational efficiency in the mine.

About this innovation challenge, AI (and digital technologies in general) is ambivalent: it obviously enables us to optimize resources and minimize certain negative externalities (e.g. digital twin of a mine, flow optimization), but it also contributes to an increase in indirect energy consumption (AI is a very high consumer of electricity). AI is thus one of the main sources of energy rebound.

One of the key challenges will therefore be to enable employers and workers' representatives to define where the real added value of AI lies in the extractive sector.

4.1. BEST PRACTICES ARISING FROM THE APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

For the mining and quarrying sector as such, the impacts of AI could mainly concern three areas.

-  Predictive maintenance: algorithms help analyse data from mining equipment to predict when it needs maintenance. This keeps operations running smoothly and reduces the risk of accidents caused by equipment failures, which boosts the safety of machines and miners.
-  Wearable technologies: AI-integrated wearable devices can monitor the health and safety of workers (heart rate, fatigue levels, and exposure to harmful substances). In the event of a security issue, these devices can quickly alert miners and supervisors.
-  Computer vision can be used to:
 -  Monitor work and give real-time updates: this information helps improve productivity and make mining sites safer. For instance, this last application can be used to map safe and dangerous areas around mining sites. Vision AI can monitor these sites in real time with great accuracy, eliminating the need for manual monitoring. If someone enters an accident-prone area, such as crushers, drills or other large equipment that rotate or vibrate, alerts will be sent to supervisors. This system can prevent serious accidents while keeping mining operations running smoothly.
 -  Monitor safety protocols through object detection: these protocols can include the identification of PPE (helmets, gloves, vests, goggles) and compliance with appropriate operational procedures. An AI monitoring system can flag miners who fail to comply with safety measures and alert the relevant authorities.
-  Facial recognition and emotion detection: it can go beyond a simple detection role to monitor stress and fatigue and become part of a generalized surveillance of the workplace, a source of anxiety and obvious and undeniable psycho-social risks. The question of respect for fundamental freedoms in the workplace will also be central to this issue.

Ensuring the proper implementation of these technologies—whose potential dystopian implications cannot be ignored—requires moving beyond a merely formal approach to social dialogue, towards one that is meaningful and of high quality, encompassing both prevention and ongoing surveillance.

5. TRAINING AND SKILLS

The automation and digitization of mining operations are among the factors of transformation of the industry's job landscape. While automation may reduce the need for manual labour, it opens opportunities for more skilled, technology-oriented positions. The demand for professionals with expertise in robotics, data analysis, and environmental science is increasing, indicating a shift towards a more knowledge-based workforce in the mining sector. This evolution presents both opportunities and challenges for education and training programs to prepare the next generation of mining professionals.

In this context, increasing access to market-relevant skills and training is a major challenge: developing accredited training and work-based learning opportunities in partnership with local educational institutions on topics such as the circular economy, digital skills and green skills. This can also support the reskilling and redeployment of workers with lost skills (i.e. implementing Just Transition).

Under the current project, the results of the questionnaire²¹ sent to the social partners show that the issue of professional transition is mainly addressed through professional development and/or re-training needs. Conversely, the issue of job-to-job transition is not covered on a regular basis though some noteworthy good practices do exist.

5.1. BEST PRACTICES ARISING FROM SOCIAL DIALOGUE AIMING TO DEVELOP TRAINING, UPSKILLING, RE-SKILLING AND IMPROVING SKILLS

This section presents two main types of good practices: agreements dealing with Just Transition and those preparing the new professionals of the future.

AGREEMENTS DEALING WITH JUST TRANSITION AND JOB-TO-JOB TRANSITION

The goals of the Just transition as a systemic, multidimensional and multifactor approach is to maximize the benefits of decarbonization, progress towards environmental sustainability and minimize the potential negative impacts on economic activity, workers, communities and territories.

In this context, there is a call for a central role to be played by social dialogue in managing and delivering just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies. Just transition requires political steering, actors and policies to make it happen and ensure it is inclusive and job rich. Social dialogue is a priority instrument to deliver these policies and should be one of the pillars for good management of transitions towards environmentally and socially sustainable economies and societies.

²¹ See the annex for the data.

TERRITORIAL JUST TRANSITION PLANS

Location: **Poland**

Stakeholders: **Trade unions, government and European Commission**

Main Objective: **Ensure a just and socially responsible transition in coal and energy-intensive regions.**



5 Territorial Just Transition Plans were fully approved by the European Commission in **December 2022**



Several social agreements have been signed **since 2020** (e.g., on hard coal mining, electricity sector, and lignite mining)

Social Agreement for energy workers and lignite miners and solutions in the form of social protections



holiday for energy workers - for up to 4 years = 80% of the employee's monthly remuneration for holiday leave

holiday for miners - for up to 4 years = 80% of the employee's monthly remuneration calculated as remuneration for holiday leave

one-off cash severance pay = 12 times the employee's monthly remuneration calculated as remuneration for holiday leave (min. 5 years of work experience required)



The condition for receiving subsidies for holidays and one-off severance pay will be the shutdown of a conventional generating unit (power unit) or a systemic reduction in brown coal extraction.

The process depends on the development of new energy sources and is extended until 2049.

Poland's Territorial Just Transition Plans show how strong social dialogue between trade unions, government, and the EU can drive transitions. Through multiple social agreements, the plans prioritise worker protection and long-term planning for a fair energy transition.

TERRITORIAL JUST TRANSITION PLANS

In December 2022, the European Commission fully approved and announced five Territorial Just Transition Plans.

Several social agreements have been signed since 2020:

- Social Agreement on hard coal mining (Katowice).
- Social Agreement on the electricity sector and lignite mining (Warsaw).

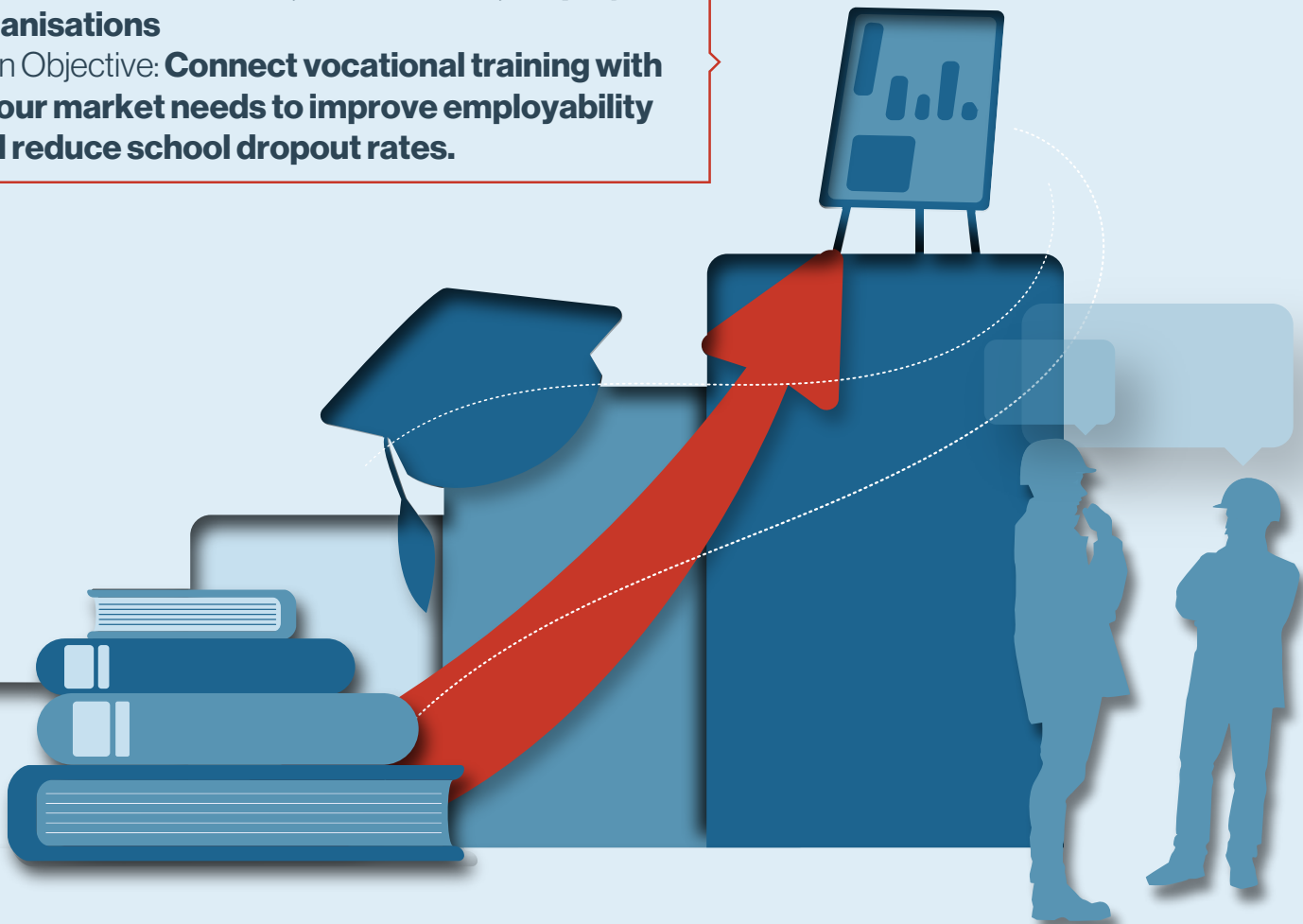
DUAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING



Location: **Spain**

Stakeholders: **Educational institutions, companies, public administrations, trade unions, employers' organisations**

Main Objective: **Connect vocational training with labour market needs to improve employability and reduce school dropout rates.**



Dual Vocational Training model developed **since 2012.**



Offers specialised qualifications in mining and geology (e.g. Mineral Resource Exploitation, Rock Drilling and Blasting).



Internships with major companies like Acciona, Ferrovial, Minera Los Frailes, and Roca across multiple regions.

Spain's Dual Vocational Training model is a best practice in multi-stakeholder collaboration. By involving schools, companies, public authorities, trade unions, and employers' organisations, it aligns training with labour market needs—boosting employability, reducing dropout rates, and preparing skilled professionals for the evolving extractive industries.

DUAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Since 2012, Spain has developed a dual vocational training (VT) model²² that aims at:

- Increasing the number of people who can obtain a post-secondary education qualification through VT.
- Achieving greater motivation in students by reducing school dropout rates.
- Facilitating labour market integration through greater engagement with companies.
- Increasing links and co-responsibility of the business community with VT.
- Strengthening collaboration between vocational training teachers and companies in the sector and promoting knowledge transfer.
- The dual vocational training system is fully applicable to the mining and quarrying industries, where several specialised qualifications are offered: Some of the qualifications available are:
 - ➔ Technician in Mineral Resource Exploitation.
 - ➔ Technician in Mineral Extraction Processes.
 - ➔ Technician in Rock Drilling and Blasting.
 - ➔ Technician in Geology.

The curriculum covers various subjects, such as geology, mining, treatment of minerals, environmental legislation and occupational risk prevention. In addition to academic courses, practical internships are organised in extractive industries²³.

²² Royal Decree 1529/2012, of 8 November, implementing the training and apprenticeship contract and establishing the basis for dual vocational training.

²³ In Madrid, practical courses are developed in companies such as Acciona and Ferrovial, which are involved in mining and construction projects. In Andalusia, companies such as Minera Los Frailes and Grupo Cementos Portland offer dual training programmes, giving students the opportunity to work in a real environment. In Castilla y León, Uralita focus on the extraction and processing of minerals. Finally, in Catalonia, several companies as Roca and Grup Miquel participate in the vocational dual training programs.

6. GREEN TRANSITION AND THE DECARBONATION PROCESS

The mining sector has a critical role to play in helping achieve climate goals. It is the key supplier of minerals and metals that are crucial in the manufacturing of energy transition technologies. However, mineral extraction and processing activities are highly energy intensive, and, therefore, the sector is also an important contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions²⁴.

The most significant volume of mining-derived emissions is generated from coal mining. However, “critical minerals” -those needed for the energy transition-are also responsible for a significant share of global GHG emissions.

Today, many mining companies have announced their commitments to decarbonisation. Pressure is now mounting on them to broaden and realise these commitments and to change the design and operation of mining projects by implementing best technologies and policy activities such as those related to the rational use of water, electrification from renewable sources²⁵, energy efficiency solutions, rehabilitation and remediation of mined land for alternative uses, such as sustainable forestry, carbon capture, carbon use and storage, waste minimisation and circular economy projects.

The issue of decarbonisation, which is one of the main challenges of the extractive industries, is still not covered on a general basis by social dialogue. The results of the survey²⁶ done in the scope of the current project shows that 21 companies participating in the study have no collective agreement and/or bargaining mechanisms on the subject.

²⁴ The sector is estimated to generate between 1.9 and 5.1 gigatons of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e) of GHG emissions annually, representing 2% to 7% of global GHG emissions and up to 10% of annual global energy-related GHG emissions (Source: “Decarbonization of the Mining sector. Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development. July 2024).

²⁵ For instance, the Swedish company Boliden is fitting its dumpers with pantographs, like trains, to enable them to travel electrically once they have been winched back up from the bottom of the mine. Not only is electricity low-carbon, but the engines are also more efficient as the trucks can travel faster on this part of the journey.

²⁶ See the annex for the data.

JUST TRANSITION AGREEMENT

COAL MINING SECTOR

Location: **Spain**

Stakeholders: **Spanish government, trade unions (CCOO, UGT, USO), coal industry (Carbuni3n), European Commission**

Main Objective: **Regenerate mining regions and promote sustainable development following the coal phase-out.**



Just Transition Strategy adopted in **2019**.



Framework Agreement for a Just Transition of Coal Mining and the sustainable development of the Mining Regions, **2019-2027**.



Includes aid for affected workers, creation of a labour pool, government support for area conversion, and a Restoration Plan.

This tripartite agreement shows how structured social dialogue can deliver a fair and sustainable transition. It combines economic regeneration, worker protection, and environmental responsibility—ensuring no one is left behind in the shift to a greener economy.



6.1. BEST PRACTICES ARISING FROM SOCIAL DIALOGUE ON THE GREEN TRANSITION

In 2019, the Spanish government adopted the Just Transition Strategy. This five-year plan included, among other tools, the Just Transition Agreements and an intervention mechanism for the most vulnerable areas of the country or sectors, i.e. the Urgent Action Plans. A fundamental instrument was also added, namely tripartite agreements with trade unions and companies in the sectors concerned, which resulted in the establishment of obligations and rights to enable progress to be made in the transition.

An important tripartite agreement was signed in connection with the Urgent Action Plan: The Framework Agreement for a Just Transition of Coal Mining and the sustainable development of the Mining Regions, 2019-2027²⁷. This agreement was set between the Spanish government, the trade unions CCOO, UGT, USO, and the National Federation of Coal Mine Entrepreneurs (Carbuni3n).

The main objective of this agreement was the economic reactivation and alternative development of mining regions to achieve their structural transformation, economic recovery and social welfare. The agreement included:

-  Aid for workers affected by the closure of coal mines.
-  The creation of a labour pool that also includes coal mining subcontractor employees.
-  The government's commitment to develop measures to support the conversion of the areas, through aid to companies and to municipal and restoration projects.
-  The commitment to develop a Restoration Plan that would allow for the environmental recovery of areas of bankrupt mining operations. The restoration of these sites is the subsidiary responsibility of the Autonomous Communities. This Restoration Plan would give priority to hiring workers from the employment pool.

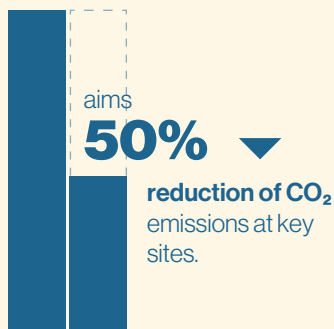
²⁷ The actions carried out between 2019 and 2023 have been compiled in a report presented on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the signing of this Framework Agreement. https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/content/dam/itj/files-1/Documents/Comision_mineria/5%20years%20of%20coal%20mining%20closure%20agreement-%20EN.pdf

WERRA 2060 PROJECT TO MODERNISE THE MINE AND ITS INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES

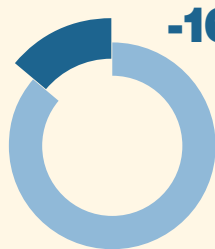
Location: **Germany**

Stakeholders: **Management, trade unions, local authorities**

Main Objective: **Modernise mining operations while reducing environmental footprint, ensuring job security, and supporting long-term regional value creation through active social dialogue.**



from **1.2** million m³/year.



Plans to reduce
saline wastewater

to **1.0** million m³/year.

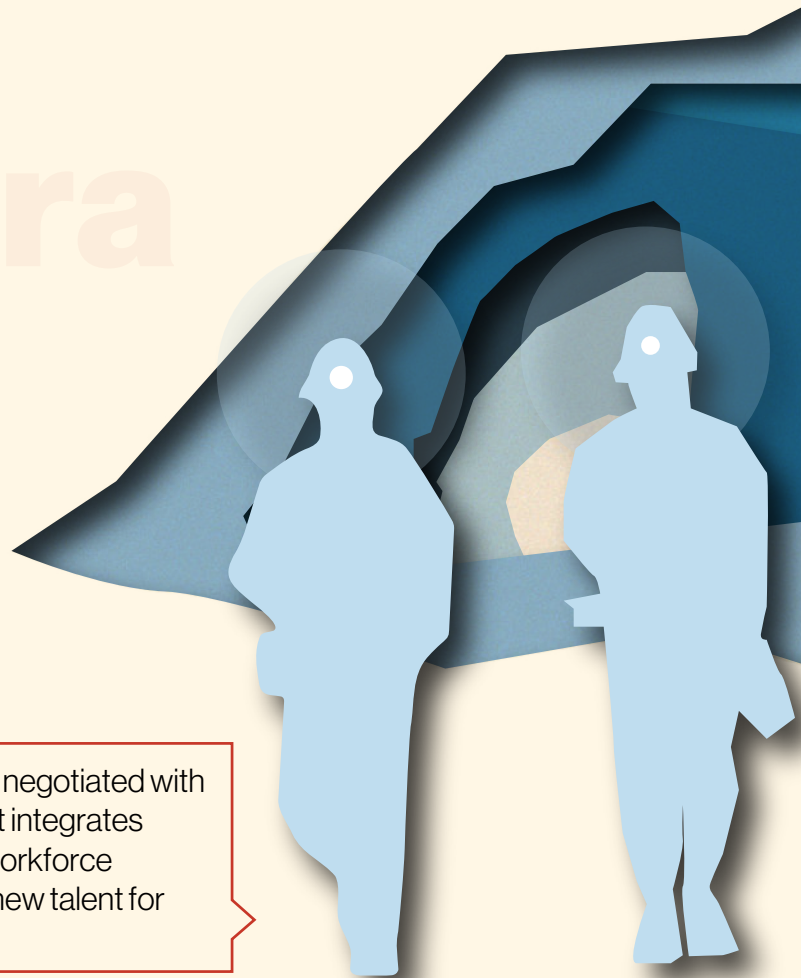


Involves an investment of
€600 million, expected
to be amortised in less
than 10 years.

Projected to generate
**over €500 million in
net present added
value.**

The Werra 2060 project

Werra 2060 is a best practice in mine modernisation, negotiated with trade unions to ensure a just and inclusive transition. It integrates environmental goals, technological innovation, and workforce planning — upskilling current workers and attracting new talent for long-term regional development.



WERRA 2060 PROJECT TO MODERNIZE THE MINE AND ITS INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES

In this project, one of the main priorities—alongside competitiveness and innovation—is to reduce the environmental footprint. Measures include new dry processing methods to cut liquid and solid tailings, and actions to lower CO₂ emissions from mining operations.

The Werra 2060 strategy includes:

- The use of dry backfill and secondary mining to stabilise underground cavities and increase yield.
- A 50% reduction of CO₂ emissions at key sites through less energy-intensive processing.
- A reduction in saline wastewater from 1.2 to 1.0 million m³/year.
- An investment of €600 million, expected to be amortised in less than 10 years.
- Creation of a more sustainable product portfolio, targeting climate-conscious markets (e.g. green potash).
- A more competitive operation with over €500 million in net present added value.

This transitional project aims to secure jobs and generate long-term value in the region. Management considers the shift towards environmentally conscious practices as a factor that enhances the site's attractiveness. However, this transformation creates a clear tension: current workers must be trained and adapted to remain employable in “the mine of tomorrow,” while the site seeks to attract new talent. Social dialogue is essential to managing this balance and ensuring a just and inclusive transition.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Minerals are essential to the transition toward green economy and in this respect, mining activities contribute to sustainable development, drive economic growth and create jobs.

However, a wide range of sustainability challenges for mining operations can be identified today, ranging from decarbonisation to water conservation or effective community engagement and, crucially, ensuring quality jobs for workers in the European extractive industries.

True sustainability cannot be achieved without addressing the social challenges faced by the extractive sector. These include attractiveness, inclusion, innovation, training and skills, twin transition (digital and green), and a strong social dialogue in order to guarantee good working conditions and put in place a just transition²⁸. The answers given to these challenges will be crucial for the mining industry to ensure its relevance and resilience in the face of an evolving global society and to guarantee the social acceptance of their activities.

With regards to these challenges, social dialogue plays a strategic role, as it enables the sector to:

- ensure Europe's energy sovereignty, while upholding principles of social and environmental sustainability,
- identify relevant levels of analysis to meet the many challenges facing the sector, and to mobilise more local players,
- set up mechanisms to:
 - ➔ ensure a socially acceptable transition
 - ➔ ensure a smooth job-to-job transitions,
 - ➔ increase competitiveness,
 - ➔ train, retrain and implement vocational training in order to ensure a just transition by improving the promotion of education and mobility
 - ➔ set realistic targets to keep pace with environmental and social changes.

This report highlights the vitality of social dialogue in its different forms, whether at transnational, national, local or company levels. Numerous and good practices show that robust social dialogue supports and accompanies the transformation of the extractive industries sector in almost every sector of employment. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint one good practice alone.

²⁸ A transition that “guarantees the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their trade unions, employers and governments, and on consultation with communities and civil society”.

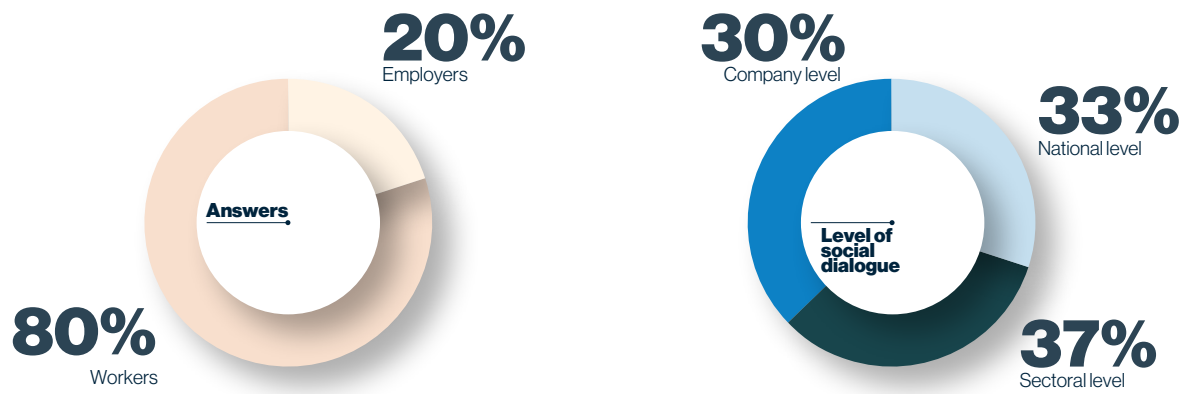
On the contrary one of the main conclusions arising from this report is that a real and active social dialogue must be encouraged and implemented across Europe by:

- Creating a supportive state and an enabling legal and regulatory framework, including dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms. This requires governments to allocate adequate resources to enhance the capacities of social partners and labour administration systems. It also requires the integration of social dialogue across all policy areas, with the state acting as both a convenor of tripartite social dialogue and as an employer in the public sector.
- Fostering representative participation to ensure that all the stakeholders address the needs and aspirations of different categories of workers and employers across all segments of labour markets, the economy and society.
- Ensuring an institutional commitment to pluralism.

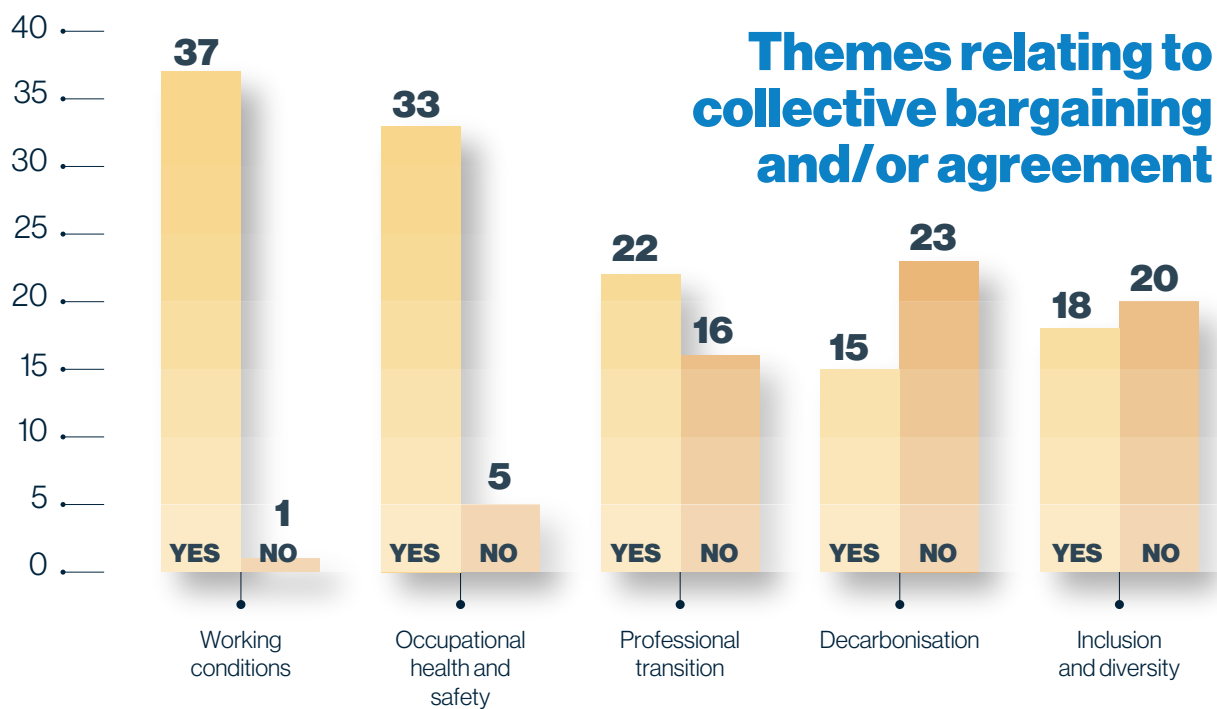
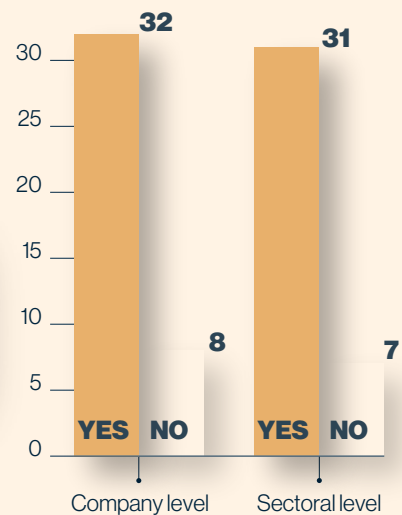
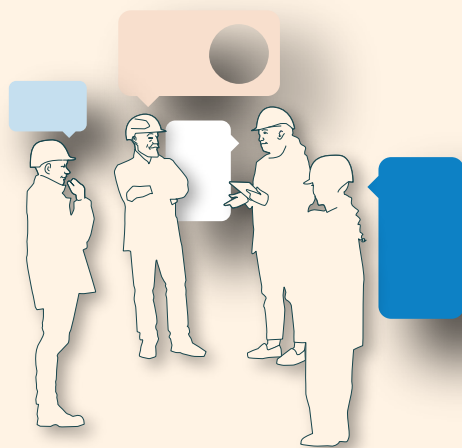
Where these pre-requisites are in place, social dialogue will improve sustainable practices in the European extractive industries and will play its role in contributing to the just development of the European extractive sector.

Social dialogue is a vital but often overlooked tool for making Europe's extractive industries not only more sustainable and socially fair, but also safer and fairer for workers. In the face of urgent demands for responsibly sourced raw materials for Europe's strategic autonomy, we must recognise that environmental and economic goals cannot be achieved without addressing the social dimension. Through meaningful dialogue between employers and workers and also with policymakers, and communities, it is possible to improve working conditions, strengthen social outcomes, and build trust and long-term resilience in the sector. This report highlighted successful examples where social dialogue has contributed to fairer, more inclusive and sustainable practices — showing that social dialogue is key and a strategic asset for the future of European mining.

ANNEX: OUTCOMES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO SOCIAL PARTNERS

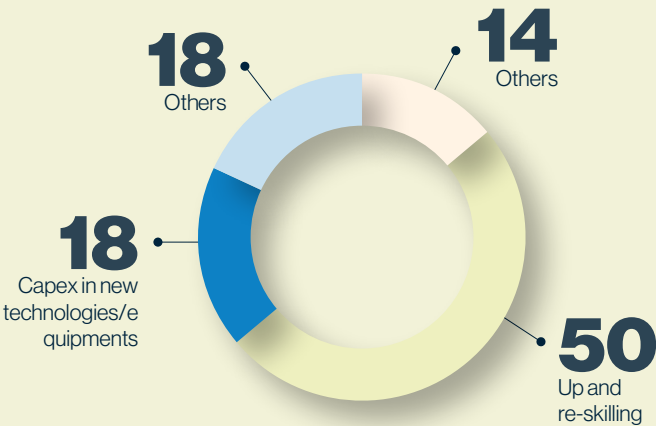
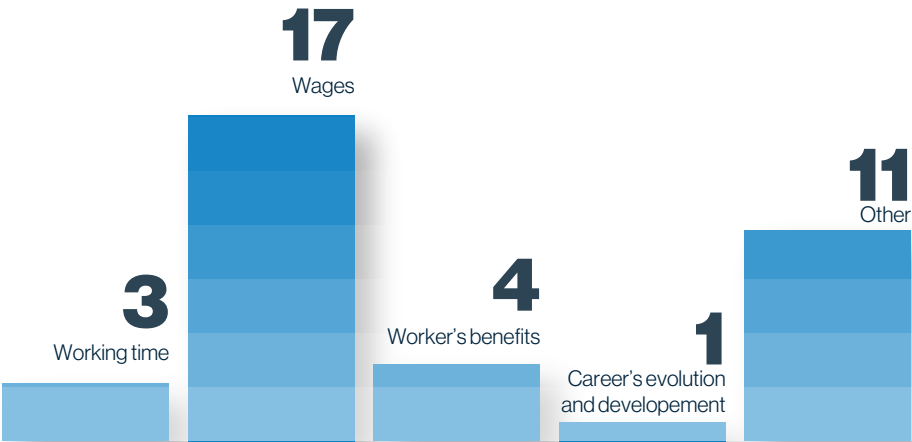


Social dialogue body



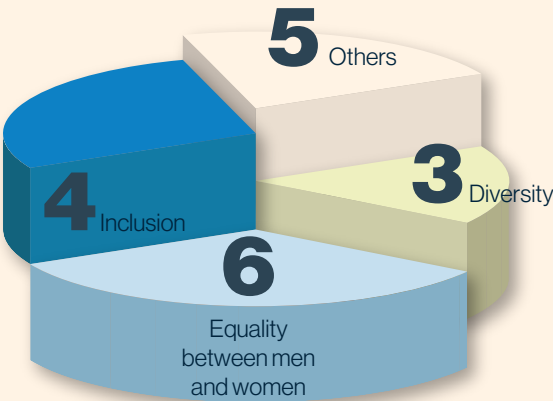
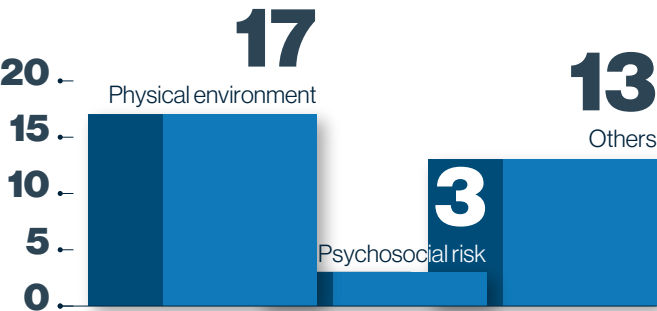
A wide range of social dialogue-related themes either at company or sectoral level, though a limited number of themes are actually covered by the agreements.

Themes in agreements related to working conditions



Themes in agreements related to professional transition

Themes in agreements related to occupational health and safety



Themes in agreements related to inclusion and diversity



syndex

KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION



SODISEES

